BENGAL DISTRICT GAZETTEERS

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GAZETTEER

OF THE

BANKURA DISTRICT.

CHAPTER I.

PHYSICAL ASPECTS.

BANKURA, the westernmost district of the Burdwān Division, is situated between 22° 38′ and 23° 38′ north latitude and between 86° 36′ and 87° 46′ east longitude. It has an area of 2,621 square miles, and, according to the census of 1901, contains a population of 1,116,411 persons. The principal civil station is Bānkurā, situated on the north bank of the Dhalkisor river in 23° 14′ N. and 87° 4′ E. GENERAL DESCRIPTION.

According to local tradition, the town was named after its reputed founder, a chieftain called Bānku Rai, from whom the Rais of Badrā, a small hamlet of Bānkurā, claim descent. Another local legend is that the town is so called after Bīr Bānkurā, one of the twenty-two sons of Bīr Hāmbīr, Rājā of Bishnupur, who divided his kingdom into as many *tarafs* or circles and gave one to each of his sons. *Taraf* Jaybeliā fell to the lot of Bīr Bānkurā, who established himself at the present site of the town, which was then in the midst of thick jungle. It may, however, be suggested as a simpler hypothesis that the name is a corruption of Bānkunda, meaning the five tanks. The name Bānkunda is found in a Sanskrit verse by Edu Misra (a genealogist of the 15th century, now regarded as an authority on the history of Bengal families), which records the fact that the great poet and ascetic, Srīharsa of the Bharadwāja *gotra*, lived in Kanka in Bānkunda to the west of Burdwān. The name Bakoonda is also found in old official records, and as late as 1863 we find the town referred to as "Bancoorah or Bacoondah."*

* Statistical and Geographical Report of the District of Bancoorah, by Lieut.-Colonel J. E. Gastrell.

Boundaries. On the north and north-east the district is bounded by the district of Burdwān, from which it is separated by the Dāmodar river; on the south-east by Hooghly; on the south by Midnapore; and on the west by Mānbhūm. In shape, it resembles an isosceles triangle wedged in between Mānbhūm and Burdwān, with its apex nearly opposite Rānīganj, and with an irregular base line resting on Midnapore and Hooghly.

Configuration. Bānkurā may be described as a connecting link between the plains of Bengal on the east and the Chotā Nāgpur plateau on the west. To the east and north-east the land is a low-lying alluvial tract, presenting the appearance of the ordinary rice lands of Bengal. Towards the west the surface gradually rises, and the level plain, green in its season with paddy, gives place to an undulating country, interspersed with rocky hillocks and broken up into low ridges and valleys. Here the face of the country is still largely covered with jungle, but in many places the surface has been denuded, leaving exposed extensive areas of hard rocky soil. To the extreme west these undulations become more pronounced, as the fringe of the Chotā Nāgpur plateau is reached; and this portion of the district consists of broken rocky country with numerous groups of hills and isolated peaks. Taken as a whole, the district consists of a wide expanse of gently undulating ground, intersected by rivers and streams flowing from north-west to south-east, which divide it into a number of parallel strips. This rolling country merges in the Gangetic delta on the one side and in a hilly broken country on the other; but the ground rises irregularly from the alluvial plain, and there is no marked ridge of hills.

Natural divisions. The district thus consists of two distinct tracts. The western portion marks the first step of the gradual descent from the tableland of Chotā Nāgpur to the delta of Lower Bengal, consisting as it does, in great measure, of the spurs projecting from the western tableland and of low swelling ridges of laterite. In the central portion of the district the country is more open and consists of a series of rolling downs, which eventually merge in the alluvial plain formed by the silt brought down by the great Gangetic rivers. The difference between the deltaic tract to the east and the rolling uplands and isolated hills to the west has been well described by Sir William Hunter, who writes:—"In Bānkurā the alluvial flats end in the undulations, isolated peaks, and short, low ranges which form the advanced guard of the hill system of the central Indian plateau. A poor, ferruginous soil and hard beds of laterite here take the place of the fertile deltaic detritus, with expanses of scrub-jungle and

sál woods for the closely-tilled village lands of the east. Instead of a wealthy and well-educated population of Hindus and Muhammadans, the western tract is comparatively thinly inhabited by races or castes of a less advanced type, and into whose constitution the aboriginal or semi-Hinduized element strongly enters."*

In the eastern portion of the district, and in the tracts adjoining the Dāmodar river, the scenery is on the whole tame and monotonous, for the eye constantly rests on wide expanses of rice fields, green in the rains but parched and dry in the hot weather. These fields, however, are fringed round by villages, encircled by clumps of bamboos, mango groves, plantain gardens and palm trees, which have a quiet beauty of their own and relieve the monotony of the scenery. Leaving the alluvial flats, the ground gradually becomes more broken, more elevated, and at the same time less cultivated. Rocks crop out, and small boulder-covered knolls make their appearance. Long broken ridges now meet the eye, either bare or covered by low jungle, from which all the largest timber has been removed, though a few trees are left to show the noble forest growth that once existed. These ridges are divided up by irregular patches of more recent alluvium, which extend into the higher ground and form narrow strips of cultivation between the uplands. During the hot weather the dry red soil and scarcity of trees give this part of the country a scorched and dreary appearance, but in the rains the fresh green of the young rice in the hollows and the foliage of the scrub-jungle form attractive contrasts of colouring. Scenery.

The scenery in this part of the district has a distinctly park-like aspect. A traveller suddenly brought here might almost imagine himself transported to some English park, and in other places is agreeably surprised to find a long vista of trees stretching along a red laterite road, which now passes into the hollows and again mounts the slopes. In the western and southern portions of the district the country is more broken and the scenery more picturesque, as the upland ridges are succeeded by low forest-clad hills and wooded glens in the south, while further to the north the Susuniā and Bihārināth hills stand out as commanding features in the landscape.

The hills of the district consist of the outliers of the Chotā Nāgpur plateau, and only two are of any great height, viz., Susuniā and Bihārināth. Susuniā, which is about 14 miles north-west of Bānkurā, runs almost due east and west for a length of 2 miles, and rises to a height of 1,442 feet above sea-level. It is still HILL SYSTEM.

* Preface to Volume IV of the Statistical Account of Bengal.

almost entirely covered with thick low forest; and at the foot of the hill is a ruined bungalow erected by a stone company, which used to quarry stone here. The Bihārināth hill is situated in the north-east corner of the district and rises to a height of 1,469 feet. There are several low hills in the Sāltorā outpost in the north-west, but the only other hills in this part of the district that call for separate mention are Mejiā and Korā (or Karo, also called Kanrā). The Mejiā hill is situated on the south bank of the Dāmodar river, nearly opposite the town of Rānīganj. Its height is inconsiderable, being only about 200 feet above the level of the surrounding country. In shape it is conical, with a spreading base and a rather sharp apex. The Korā or Karo hill, with a height of about 350 or 400 feet, lies about half way between Mejiā and Bānkurā town, and close to the Bānkurā-Rānīganj road. It is of an elongated contour, running east and west; the west side is steeply scarped, and the north and south sides are also precipitous. On the east, however, the hill rises from the ground with a very gentle and long ascent, reaching its greatest height just over the precipitous western face.

To the south in thānas Khātrā and Raipur are a number of low but picturesque hills, of which one, known locally as Masaker Pāhār, to the east of Khātrā, is the subject of a curious legend. It contains a cave, which the people long believed no one dare or could enter. Local tradition relates that this cave was the residence, in former times, of a *muni* or sage, who used to reward the visits of his patron, a neighbouring Rājā, by a present of a gold mohur every time he came. He always seemed to draw this coin out of his matted hair, and the Rājā came to the conclusion that his head was full of gold. He accordingly had it cut off, but obtained nothing but the curse of the dying *muni*, which long clung to his descendants in the form of hereditary insanity.

RIVER SYSTEM.

The district is bounded on the north by the Dāmodar river, and is intersected by a number of rivers flowing from north-west to south-east in courses roughly parallel to one another. They debouch from the western hills, and are nearly all hill streams, which come down in flood after heavy rain but subside as rapidly as they rise. Their beds are sandy, and in the summer months nearly everywhere dry up. The banks are well defined, and are chiefly composed of clay and sand mixed with *kankar*, with laterite rocks cropping up here and there. The following is a brief account of the most important of these rivers.

Dāmodar.

The Dāmodar takes its rise in the hills of Chotā Nāgpur, and touches upon the Bānkurā district just after it has received the

waters of the Barākar. It then flows in a south-easterly direction, forming the boundary between Bānkurā and Burdwān for about 45 miles, and enters Burdwān near Samsār in thāna Indās in this district. The course of the river is tolerably straight, but it is full of sand banks, with a fall of 3·40 feet per mile. During the rains, or from the middle of July till the middle of October, it is navigable by country boats; but the rapidity of the current and the sudden freshets and floods to which it is liable render navigation hazardous. In the hot season the river dwindles away into an insignificant stream, fordable nearly everywhere and in many places not a foot deep. There is no river-borne traffic worthy of the name, with the exception of large rafts of timber floated down the stream. During the rains, numbers of logs are fastened together by ropes to form rafts, locally called *mārs*, with three or four men to steer them. The rafts so formed are sometimes 50 to 60 yards long, and generally flotillas of 10 or 12 rafts are launched together from the timber-yielding tracts higher up the river.

The Dāmodar is liable to heavy floods in the lower portion of its course. The size of the channel of the river in its lower part being much less than in its upper part, it is impossible to retain within its banks the whole volume of water which comes down when the river is in flood, and the greater part of the flood discharge must pass out and spread over the country. As the floods in the Dāmodar do not last long, and as the quality of the silt which this river carries is good, the mere inundation due to the flood does good as well as harm, and is certainly not a serious evil. There is, however, in all such cases a danger of the flood water cutting channels through the soft banks of the stream and forming branch streams, which continue to flow after the flood has subsided and which tend to alter the regime of the river.

Though the floods of the Dāmodar rarely do great damage in this district, much distress is sometimes caused by the formation of great head-waves. At times of flood, the rain water pours off the hills through hundreds of channels with such suddenness into the river bed, that the waters heap up and form a dangerous head-wave, called the *hurpābān*, which is not unlike the bore or tidal wave of the Hooghly, but of greater breadth, extending nearly from bank to bank. This head-wave presents the appearance of a wall of water, sometimes five feet in height, and may cause loss of life and considerable damage to property.

The Dāmodar is the terrestrial object most venerated by the Santāls; and the country that is most closely associated with their

name, and which they apparently regard as their fatherland, lies between it and the Kāsai. They speak of it as their sea, and the obsequies of their dead are considered incomplete till some charred fragment of the burnt body is committed to the stream, to be borne away to the ocean.

Sālī. The chief tributary of the Dāmodar is the Sālī, which rises a few miles west of Korā hill and falls into the Dāmodar at the village of Samsār in thāna Indās. This river drains a large portion of the north of the district.

Dhalkisor. Of the other rivers flowing through Bānkurā the most important is the Dhalkisor or Dwārkeswar. This river takes its rise near the Tilābani hills in Mānbhūm district, and flowing south-east enters the district of Bānkurā near Dumdā in *pargana* Chhātnā. It pursues a rather tortuous course to the south-east, with several bifurcations through the Bānkurā, Ondā and Bishnupur thānas, and leaves the district near Huzrā in thāna Kotalpur. In the lower portion of its course, after its confluence with the Silai on the borders of Midnapore, this river is known as the Rūpnārāyan. Its fall is less than that of the Dāmodar, and its current is hardly perceptible from the end of November to the beginning of June, but in the rains it is subject to heavy floods and is often an impassable torrent.

Gandheswarī. The Dhalkisor has many branches or old beds in thānas Ondā and Bishnupur, most of which meander about for some distance and then rejoin the parent stream. They dry up in the hot weather, to be again replenished in the succeeding rains, and are known as *kānā nadīs* or dried-up rivers. The principal branch is the Jasodā *Khāl*, which separates from the Dhalkisor near Abantikā in the Bishnupur subdivision.

During its course through the district the Dhalkisor receives many tributaries, the principal of which are the Gandheswarī, the Kukhrā and the Birai, all small streams with rocky beds. The largest of these is the Gandheswarī, which, flowing south-west of Susuniā hill and north of Bānkurā, joins the Dhalkisor near Bhūtsahar, a village two miles from the town. Like the Dhalkisor, it is subject to sudden freshets; and before now officers returning to Bānkurā from tours in the north of the district have had to wait till the waters fell and so enabled them to cross over by the causeway laid across its bed.

Silai. The river Silai or Silābatī rises in the Mānbhūm district, and, entering Bānkurā near Sālanpur in thāna Khātrā, has a short course in the south of the district, through that thāna and the Simlāpāl outpost, before it passes into Midnapore, where it joins the Dhalkisor. It is liable to heavy floods, although at most

times, even during the rains, it is easily fordable. There are some small but picturesque waterfalls along its course near Hārmāsrā. Its principal tributary is the Jaypandā or Jaykhāl, which rises near Bagā in thāna Khātrā.

Kāsai. The river Kāsai or Kansābatī enters the district near Bāmandihi in Khātrā, and, after receiving the waters of the Kumārī at Ambikānagar, flows through thānas Khātrā and Raipur, leaving the district near Bara Pokhuriā in Raipur. Just above Raipur the river forms several picturesque waterfalls, but they are of no great height. The Kāsai is the only river navigable during the rains besides the Dāmodar. Formerly a considerable quantity of timber was floated down it from Raipur to Midnapore, but with the wholesale destruction of forest trees in the western jungle tracts, this traffic has been greatly reduced.

There is also a minor river in Raipur thāna called the Bhairabbānki, which rises in the hills of Syāmsundarpur and has a course of a few miles in the district.

LAKES, MARSHES AND CANALS. There are no natural lakes or canals or artificial watercourses in the district, except an artificial channel, called the Subhankarī *Khāl*, which is popularly attributed to the famous Bengal mathematician Subhankar Rai. This old channel was repaired during the famine operations of 1896-97, but has gradually silted up. Near the town of Bishnupur, and within the old fortifications, are several picturesque tanks or small artificial lakes, constructed by the former Rājās, who, taking advantage of natural hollows, threw embankments across them to confine the surface drainage. These tanks or lakes served to supply the city and fort with an abundance of good water, and also to fill the fort moat.

There are many small excavated tanks in the more level portion of the district; but in the uplands, the natives, in place of digging tanks, throw embankments (called *bāndhs*) across the slopes and hollows, in order to retain the surface drainage water for irrigation purposes. Springs are also common throughout the uplands, but the inhabtants do not use spring water, which, although clear and sparkling, and pleasant to the taste, is believed to be injurious to health. There are a few natural pools to be seen along the banks of the rivers Silai and Jaypandā or Jaykhāl. They are of small breadth and depth, and are locally called *Asura panj*, or *khāls* made by the feet of *Asuras*. Near Mejiā is a large swamp, called the Mejiā *Bil*, formed by the overflow of the Dāmodar.

FORESTS. The uplands are still covered in many parts with wide stretches of low scrub-jungle or of young *sāl* (*Shorea robusta*) saplings, with occasionally a dense thorny undergrowth. In the west and south, trees of larger growth are found, but in the central portion

of the district nothing but stunted jungle now remains, all else having been cleared away by the woodman or charcoal burner. Even now, though the larger trees have been felled long ago, the latter, wherever they can, dig up and burn down the roots and stumps for their charcoal kilns. The consequence is that, where no restriction is placed upon indiscriminate clearance, the soil is rapidly becoming barren. Here and there, it is true, a scanty herbage still springs up under the slight cover afforded by the stunted bushes remaining. But so insufficient and coarse is it, if left to itself, that the inhabitants resort to the expedient of forcing it by firing the scrub in March and April. With the first shower of rain, the grass again shoots up, and being of a finer and better quality, affords a little more nutriment to the half-starved cattle. But unfortunately at this time the young *sāl* is just putting forth new leaves and shoots, and, these being destroyed, its growth and spread are effectually retarded. The surface soil of the uplands, being thus deprived of the protection which Nature would otherwise afford, is washed away by every fall of rain, leaving exposed large areas of hard compact ferruginous soil, on which nothing will grow. In this way, the district is being slowly but surely denuded of its forests.

In spite of this, the *sāl* forest growth, which has been left or is springing up, is of some economic value, and there are several jungle estates, which are cropped either yearly for firewood or at larger intervals for the sake of saplings. The jungles also produce a small quantity of tusser cocoons, which are reeled into thread by women of the weaver class, and some medicinal plants, which are used by native physicians for medicinal purposes.

GEOLOGY. The greater portion of the district consists of a rolling country covered by laterite and alluvium, which, it is believed, was originally a region, or if, as is highly probable, it were subaqueous, a sea-bottom formed by an undulating surface of rock, from which rose numerous rocky islands, themselves the relics of a former denudation. To the east there is a wide plain of recent alluvium, while metamorphic or gneissose rocks are found to the extreme west, which includes a few of the more easterly projecting headlands of the immense area of gneissose rocks comprised in Chotā Nāgpur. These outliers are numerous in the south-west of Bānkurā, while in the north-west, and across towards Māliārā, metamorphic rocks stand up boldly in well-marked ridges or bands, the prevailing character of which is hornblendic, associated with granitoid gneiss. Strong massive runs of the hornblendic varieties stretch across the country in tolerably continuous lines, the general strike being nearly east and west. The same prevailing

hornblendic character of the rocks continues southwards to the small hill of Korā, which is composed of a granular quartzite of light greyish-white colour. This hill is in the same line as the more marked rise of Susuniā to the west, and it may not improbably be connected with the same line of faulting or disturbance. There is a marked change in the direction of the rocks north and south of this line, which seems to confirm such a supposition. Close to Korā hill on the south-west, hornblendic schists occur, traversed by numerous veins of pegmatitic granite. They seldom exceed one foot in width, but they may often be traced for hundreds of yards, the fleshy white colour of the felspar contrasting strongly with the dark greyish-green of the decomposing hornblendic rocks. They frequently form a little sharp ridge, and look like a great white cable stretched along the surface. Schorl is abundant in them and, with a pinkish felspar and pure quartz, forms the entire rock.

As one approaches the town of Bānkurā, the rocks become markedly hornblendic, traversed by granite veins, while to the east the gneiss becomes gradually covered up with laterite masses and coarse sandy clays. In the town itself, and to the west of it, gneiss is abundantly seen, shewing in great rounded bosses—the tops of swelling masses, which just peep through the more recent deposits of lateritic and gravelly character. South of Bānkurā, veins of epidiotic granite may be traced cutting through the gneissose rocks; and toward the west, gneissose and hornblendic rocks may be seen here and there just beneath the surface of the ferruginous gravel and laterite clays. In the Silai river in the south-west of the district the metamorphic rocks are well exposed, but they are much disturbed, and cut up by many irregular veins of granite. This granite is highly micaceous along the edges, the mica being found in large crystalline masses of a whitish colour.

But the most characteristic geological feature of the district is the area of laterite and associated rocks of sands and gravels. In places one finds true laterite in hard massive beds and blocks, in other places laterite gravels, which have all the appearance of being the result of the decomposition and re-arrangement of this more massive laterite. The ferruginous gravels in some places seem to pass by almost imperceptible changes into the solid laterite, and in a few instances have become recemented into a mass not easily distinguished from that rock. On the other hand, they pass by equally insensible gradations into a coarse sandy clay containing only a few of the ferruginous nodules of laterite, which are barely sufficient to give a red tint to the whole.

In this case also calcareous *kankar* is frequently associated. It may be mentioned that locally the nodular ferruginous rock, known as laterite, is generally called *kankar*, while the calcareous concretions, commonly used as the source of lime, which a geologist would call *kankar*, are known as *ghutin*.

In the north of the district laterite does not cover any great area between the alluvial flats along the river Dāmodar on the one hand and the gneiss on the other. It is seen near Barjorā and in thin patches of no great extent nearer to the town of Bānkurā. In the higher and more broken ground extending to Sonāmukhī and the Dhalkisor, it covers the greater part of the swelling coppice-covered ridges, and is for the most part gravelly in character, but here and there forms thick, solid and massive beds. Towards the west, it becomes thinner and less marked, and gradually more mixed up with the debris of the gneiss. The flats of the Dhalkisor now intervene, and south of that river laterite again shews, forming similar long low swelling ridges of broken ground, which extend from Bānkurā to Midnapore.

Wherever it has been seen, the laterite is detrital, *i.e.*, it contains pebbles of quartz and often of other rocks also, but chiefly of quartz. Not infrequently these imbedded pebbles and fragments increase in number, until the rock becomes a coarse ferruginous conglomerate. Layers of sandstones are frequently found with this conglomerate, irregular in their development and arrangement. Near Sonāmukhī to the east, this recent conglomerate, which forms an upper cake-like coating where the laterite rocks occur, rests upon a bed of loose quartz pebbles forming a coarse clean gravel. Most of the pebbles are well rounded, some of them being as big as a man's head. Another point of interest connected with these laterite deposits is that, as we approach the gneiss rocks to the west, the number and the size of the fragments of quartz, felspar, and other debris of those rocks increase, clearly indicating the source from which they have been derived. The laterite itself gradually thins out and dies away towards the west, becoming broken up into isolated patches of smaller and smaller extent and thickness, until at last a few loose blocks may be the only trace of its former occurrence. On the other hand, the deposit becomes more continuous and thicker towards the east, until it is covered up by clays. Widely spread over these laterite rocks, there is a sandy clay often composed to a large extent of the small rounded nodular concretions of the laterite, and passing from this into an ordinary sandy clay with calcareous *kankar*.

The Gondwāna system is represented in the northern portion of the district south of the Dāmodar river between Mejiā and the Bihārināth hill. The beds are, however, much covered by alluvium. They belong to the Rānīganj group, and may contain useful seams of coal.*

BOTANY.

The eastern portion of the district forms part of the rice plains of Western Bengal, and land under rice cultivation contains the usual marsh weeds of the Gangetic plain. On ponds, ditches and still streams, float aquatic plants, accompanied by many submerged water weeds. Round villages, and in the neighbourhood of towns, there are the usual shrubberies of semi-spontaneous, often sub-economic, shrubs and small trees, which are occasionally of considerable extent. The more characteristic shrubby species are *Glycosmis*, *Polyalthia suberosa*, *Clerodendron infortunatum*, *Solanum torvum*, and various other species of the same genus, besides *Trema*, *Streblus* and *Ficus hispida*. Some other species of figs, most notably the *pīpal* and banyan, with the red cotton tree (*Bombax malabaricum*), mango (*Mangifera indica*), and *jiyal* (*Odina Wodier*), make up the arborescent part of these thickets, in which *Phœnix dactylifera* and *Borassus flabellifer* are often present in considerable quantities. Hedges and waste places are covered with climbing creepers and various milk weeds, and also harbour quantities of *Jatropha gossypifolia*, *Urena*, *Heliotropium*, *Sida* and similar plants. Roadsides are often clothed with a sward of short grasses, and open glades with taller grasses of a coarse character, while in dry places there are several kinds of grasses peculiar to dry regions that have wandered from the west to this district. Where there are patches of forest or scrub-jungle, other than those of the village shrubbery class, the more striking constituents are *Wendlandia exserta*, *Gmelina arborea*, *Adina cordifolia*, *Holarrhena antidysenterica*, *Wrightia tomentosa*, *Vitex Negundo* and *Stephegyne parvifolia*.

The rest of the district is higher, and here the uplands are bare or covered with a scrub-jungle of *Zizyphus* and other thorny shrubs. This scrub-jungle gradually merges into forest, where *sâl* (*Shorea robusta*) is gregarious, while the low hills are covered by a mixed forest containing species of *Miliusa*, *Schleichera*, *Diospyros* and other trees.

The following is a brief account of the most common trees and plants of economic use found in the district. *Alkushī* (*Mucuna*

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* *The Geological Structure and Physical Features of Bānkurā, Midnapore and Orissa*, Memoirs, Geological Survey of India, Vol. I, Pt. 3. *The Rānīganj Coal-field*, by W. T. Blanford, Vol. III, Pt. 1.

pruriens) is a leguminous creeper, the seeds and seed-vessels of which are pounded and used as a blister; the seed-vessels are covered with fine hairy spines, which are highly irritating to the skin when handled, causing inflammation and swelling. The *amaltās* (*Cassia Fistula*) is one of the handsomest trees in the district, having large pendulous bright yellow flowers, which have given it the name of the Indian laburnum. The pulp, which is of a dark-brown colour and sub-acid taste, serves as a laxative, while the leaves and seeds are pounded and used as a purge. The wood is much sought after by the poorer classes for props to their houses, as it is hard and durable, and is not easily affected by damp, or readily attacked by white ants. The *āsan* (*Terminalia tomentosa*) is another valuable tree, yielding a good wood, which is chiefly employed for making lintels and door-posts. The leaves furnish one of the chief supplies of food to the tusser silkworm, which spins its cocoons on the small branches or twigs; and its branches are frequented by the shellac insect. The *babūl* (*Acacia arabica*) is common in the district. The flowers and seeds are used for medicine; the seeds are given to cattle as fodder in bad seasons; the gum exuding from the bark is collected and sold in the bazars. From the wood, which is valued for its durability and hardness, cart-wheels and ploughs are made, while the bark yields a good tan; a decoction of it is often used to harden the soles of the feet.

The *bair* (*Zizyphus Jujuba*) yields a small, round, acid and astringent fruit, which the poorer classes gather when ripe, dry on the roofs of their houses, and use as food. The wood is of little use, but fences round the fields are made from the smaller branches. The *bel* (*Aegle Marmelos*) grows freely in Bānkurā, and often attains a large size. The natives bake the fruit in its rind or shell, and administer it for dysenteric affections; a decoction of the bark and root is sometimes used by them in cases of palpitation of the heart, and a decoction of the leaves in asthmatic complaints. The plant called *bāg bherendā* (*Jatropha Curcas*) grows round most of the village gardens. The seeds, from which oil is also expressed, are used as a cathartic, and the leaves for poultices; the milky juice that exudes from the stem when cut forms, with oxide of iron, a good black varnish. The roots of the *bichuti* (*Tragia involucrata*) are employed by native doctors as an alterative medicine, while the sharply stinging spines on the leaves are sometimes wetted and applied to paralyzed limbs to excite sensibility. The fruit of the *baherā* (*Terminalia belerica*) is also used medicinally on account of its astringent and tonic properties. Infused in water, it is given as a cooling

draught in fevers, and the expressed juice forms a basis for several colours in dyeing. The seeds are used for making ink, and oil for burning is extracted from them.

The rank poisonous plant called *dhatūrā* (*Datura stramonium*) may be seen growing in the vicinity of many villages. As is well known, it possesses narcotic qualities, and the seeds, when eaten, produce intoxication with fierce delirium. They are sometimes mixed with sweemeats, and secretly administered, in order to facilitate theft or other criminal designs. The leaves smoked with tobacco are said to be useful in asthma. The *dhāman* tree (*Cordia Macleodii*) is found in the western jungles, and yields a hard, close-grained and elastic wood used for *bānghis*, and, by the Santāls, for bows, ploughs, etc. The *gāb* tree (*Diospyros Embryopteris*) is chiefly valued on account of its fruit, the expressed juice of which, boiled down to a thick consistency, is used as a varnish to protect boats from decay and from the attacks of worms. The juice contains about 60 per cent. of tannic acid, and is a valuable astringent and styptic, which finds a place in the native pharmacopœia. When ripe, the fruit forms an article of food, which is much esteemed by the country people. The fruit of the *harrā* (*Terminalia chebula*) is also used medicinally as a purgative. Mixed with catechu, it is a favourite remedy for ulcer in the mouth. The *imli* (*Tamarindus indica*) is common all over the district; the fruit is dried and used in curries, or mixed with water for sherbet, but the natives believe that, unless drunk very sparingly, it induces rheumatism. The wood is hard and close grained, and is used for making oil-presses, sugar mills, etc.

Kuchilā (*Strychnos Nux-vomica*), which yields the common *Nux-vomica* poison, is common in the jungles to the west and south, and is also found near the town of Bānkurā. The seeds act as a stimulant tonic in small doses; and it is not uncommon to find cows eating the leaves, the result being that their milk has a sharp bitter taste for several days. The *mahuā* (*Bassia latifolia*) is very common and furnishes an important part of the food supply of the poorer classes. When its thick waxy-leaved flowers begin to fall, the people gather them up carefully, and dry them for food or sell them for the distillation of country spirit. The seeds yield an oil and a kind of buttery substance, both of which are used to mix with and adulterate *ghī*, while a decoction of the bark and leaves is said to be useful in cases of rheumatism. From the *palās* (*Butea frondosa*) the gum called "Bengal kino" is produced. It is rich in tannic and gallic acids, is a powerful astringent, and is very useful in cases of diarrhœa. The *sajinā* (*Moringa pterygosperma*), commonly called the horse-radish tree, is

a common tree in Bānkurā. The flowers and young pods are used in curries, the pods also making a good pickle with vinegar and salt. The roots, which have a pungent taste, furnish a substitute for horse-radish, and are also considered useful in cases of paralysis. A limpid oil called *ben* is extracted from the seeds, which is used in perfumes and also by watch-makers. The *kend* (*Diospyros melanoxylon*) is found in most of the uncleared jungle. It yields a very hard, close-grained wood, the centre or core being very hard and black, and, in old trees, similar to ebony; this black heart-wood is, in fact, known as Bengal ebony. Besides the above, the mango, date-palm, *nim*, *pīpal*, banyan, red cotton tree and *jiyal* are common.

FAUNA. Wild animals.

Though the physical features of a large part of Bānkurā resemble those of the adjoining districts of Chotā Nāgpur, it is far from being so well stocked with game. This is due to the gradual thinning out and, in many places, the entire extermination of the extensive *sāl* jungles which once covered the uplands, and to the continued extension of cultivation, which have gradually driven big game westwards. It is also due, in a large measure, to the ruthless destruction of animal life by Santāls and other forest tribes, who never lose an opportunity of killing whatever living thing they come across. This is especially the case in the course of their large annual beats, which take place at certain festivals in the hot weather. On these occasions they gather in hundreds, and the jungles are practically denuded of all game, for nothing comes amiss to their bows and arrows or sticks, their aim with those weapons being marvellously accurate. It must not be supposed, however, that the district has been altogether denuded of big game, for both leopards and bears are still found in the more remote jungles and even occasionally in the vicinity of the town of Bānkurā. But they are becoming scarcer year by year, as cultivation expands, the need for fuel becomes greater, and the jungle becomes thinner.

According to a report furnished by the District Officer, tigers still occasionally frequent the jungles at Sāltorā in the north-west and in the Raipur thāna to the south-west. A few man-eaters are also said to be found in the extensive jungles of Kuinā, Kama, Chālnā and Jobī in thāna Khātrā, which have an aggregate area of 12 square miles; in 1904 two persons were reported as having been killed by them. Leopards, wild bear and hyænas are said to be found in the jungles at Bīrsinghā, Sātgāchi, Mānikbazar and Bansi in the Jayrāmpur outpost; at Hātbāri, Krishnaganj, Jādabnagar and Jīrmohān in the Kotalpur thāna; at Belbānd, Belsuliā and Kāmārpokhur in the Bishnupur thāna;

in the low jungle-clad hills of thāna Raipur; at Sauliā, Jaykrishnapur, Dhabanī and Beliatore in the Barjorā outpost; at Siālpāhārī, Kochdānga, Dhānsimlā and Dhandol in the Sonāmukhī thāna; and in the jungles to the south of the Tāldāngrā outpost. Spotted deer are reported to have their habitat at the Turā hill and in the jungles of Jhāri, Tālghari and Dubrājpur in thāna Raipur. It should be added, however, that there are no well-authenticated instances of tiger being found in the district since the early sixties, and that the natives often use the term *bara bāgh* for large leopards or panthers, which are still plentiful in parts of the district.

Wild elephants were formerly fairly numerous, but have now disappeared. The last occasion on which wild elephants visited the district was in 1898—1900, when three of these beasts roamed through the south-western portion of the district and gradually worked their way to within 12 miles of the town of Bānkurā. They were eventually proclaimed by Government in consequence of their having caused great damage to the crops and proved dangerous to human life; and two European sportsmen succeeded in shooting one enormous male, by a single well-placed bullet from an eight-bore paradox, and in wounding a second, which killed a boy in his wild career westward. Since that year wild elephants have not appeared in the district, though it is possible that a few may still find their way to their former haunts and visit the extreme south-west from neighbouring districts.

The common black or sloth bear is still fairly plentiful, though not found in the same numbers as 40 or even 30 years ago, when there was scarcely a large patch of jungle that could be beaten without one or two, or even more, being turned out. Now, except in the more remote jungles, it scarcely pays to have a beat, jungle after jungle proving blank; and the best way of securing a bear is to wait till news is brought of a she-bear with cubs having taken up quarters in a den. They are very destructive to the maize and sugarcane crops, and are often found stripping *mahuā* trees of their flowers, of which they are exceedingly fond; the mother generally climbs the tree and shakes the branches in order to make the flowers fall down to her cubs below. They frequently attack harmless men and women, who happen to cross their path while engaged in burning charcoal or gathering fuel; and it is not an uncommon sight to see patients in the dispensaries who have suffered severe maulings from them, the head being frequently badly damaged by their attempts to tear off the scalp.

Leopards are still found, though in decreasing numbers, and here as elsewhere are particularly destructive to smaller cattle, sheep, goats, and dogs. They are commonly trapped in cages. There is a well-authenticated instance of a remarkable capture of a leopard at Raipur, which is worthy of mention. Two young Santāl *rākhāl* or cowherd boys were returning home after grazing their cattle, when they caught sight of the tail of a leopard protruding through the trellis work of the cowshed. One of them dashed forward and caught hold of the tail, pulling the leopard towards him, while he told his brother to run into the cowshed and belabour the brute with a thick stick. This his brother did, and with such effect that the beast was soon *hors de combat* and ultimately killed outright.

Among other carnivorous animals the following are fairly common:—hyænas, jackals, fox, civet cats, and wild cats of several species, as well as the ubiquitous mongoose. Wild pig and wolves are rarer, but are occasionally met with, and wild dogs are still more uncommon. It is somewhat surprising that wild pig are not more numerous, considering the area of jungle still left, but their paucity is probably due to their destruction while still young by leopards, hyænas and wolves, as well as by the jungle tribes, who are particularly fond of their flesh and never lose an opportunity of catching them irrespective of sex or size. Deer are rare, and can only be found in the extreme west, on the borders of Mānbhūm, where a few spotted, hog, barking, ravine, and dwarf deer are occasionally seen, but the noble *sāmbar* seldom, if ever. Other common animals are monkeys, chiefly the large black-faced *hanumān*, squirrels, porcupines, and rats and mice of every description, including the odoriferous musk rat.

Game birds.

Pea-fowl are still fairly numerous in some parts of the district. Among other game birds are grey and black partridge, jungle fowl, quail, pigeons and an occasional lesser florican. On the Dāmodar and Kāsai rivers several species of wild goose, duck, snipe and ordinary water-fowl are found in fair numbers, but are not so common as in other districts. Other common birds are those usually met with in other parts of Bengal, ranging from the vulture and fish-eagle to the bulbul, sparrow, honey-sucker, and other birds too numerous to mention in detail.

Fish.

The fish found in Bānkurā are the common ones met with in other parts of Bengal and are mostly caught in tanks or irrigation reservoirs (*bāndhs*). The most common species are the *rui*, *mirgel* and *kātlā*. During freshets *hilsā* find their way up the Dāmodar and some of the hill-streams, and in the dry season large prawns

(*chingri*) are caught in the shallows of the rivers. Here, as elsewhere, every pool of water is ruthlessly fished, and even the smallest fry are not spared.

Snakes are not very numerous, but several varieties are found, including the cobra and *karait* (*Bungarus coeruleus*), the *dhāman*, which grows to a large size, an occasional python in the hilly and rocky parts, and the ordinary grass and other harmless snakes.* Reptiles.

The climate, especially in the upland tracts to the west, is much drier than that of Eastern Bengal. From the middle of March to the beginning of June hot westerly winds prevail, and the heat during the day time is oppressive, the thermometer in the shade rising as high as 110° to 115°F. These westerly winds generally die away during the afternoon, after which a cool breeze sets in from the south about sunset, and lasts until early morning, when another lull ushers in the scorching westerly breeze again. North-westers, however, are frequent during these months, and help to mitigate the excessive heat of the day. They are accompanied by more thunder and lightning, but far less rain, than is observed with such storms further to the eastward. Indeed, they often pass over without any rainfall, and in such cases the thunder and lightning, and the force of the wind, are violent. During the rains, which set in during the month of June and last until the middle of September, the climate is comparatively pleasant, for it is not so sultry, damp and steamy as in other Bengal districts at the same season of the year. The cold weather is also far more bracing and enjoyable, the air is clear, and fogs are rarely seen. CLIMATE.

In Bānkurā, like some of the more westerly districts of South-West Bengal, where the surface soil is composed of red laterite and the hot westerly winds from Central India penetrate at times, exceptionally high day temperatures are a feature of the hot weather months. The mean maximum temperature, which is on an average below 80° in December and January, rises to 82° in February, 93° in March and 102° in April. Thereafter, there is a steady fall until the monsoon is established. The mean temperature for the year is 80°.

The monthly rainfall is less than an inch from November to January, and between one inch and two inches from February to April, after which there is a rapid increase owing to the occasional incursion of cyclonic storms in May. During the monsoon season climatic conditions are very similar to those obtaining in other parts of South-West Bengal. The rainfall is maintained

* The above account of the Fauna of Bānkurā has been prepared from a note kindly contributed by Mr. W. C. Lydiard of The Manor, Bānkurā.

chiefly by cyclonic storms, which form in the north-west angle of the Bay of Bengal and influence weather over the whole of the south-west of the Province, and also by inland depressions, which form over the central districts of Bengal and move slowly westward. As the district is more in the line of advance of these latter disturbances, rainfall is not so appreciably lighter as might be expected from its inland position. The average fall in June is 10·8 inches, in July 12·2 inches, in August 11·9 inches, in September 8·7 inches, and in October 3·1 inches. The total average fall for the year is 55·26 inches.

The following table shows the rainfall recorded at each of the registering stations during the cold, hot and rainy seasons, the figures shewn being the averages recorded in each case:—

STATION.	Years recorded.	November to February.	March to May.	June to October.	Annual average.
Bānkurā	43—46	2·00	6·68	47·54	56·22
Bishnupur	21—22	1·97	7·91	48·59	58·47
Gangājalghāti ...	15—16	1·78	5·79	46·68	54·25
Indās	16—17	1·70	8·24	44·44	54·38
Khātrā	20—21	2·05	6·27	50·94	59·26
Kotalpur	16—17	1·87	6·80	46·10	54·77
Māliārā	20—21	1·43	5·30	44·32	51·05
Ondā	16—17	1·37	5·19	43·95	50·51
Raipur	15—16	1·88	8·02	51·19	61·09
Sonāmukhī	15—16	2·02	6·56	44·06	52·64
AVERAGE ...	...	1·81	6·67	46·78	55·26

CHAPTER II.

HISTORY.

THE history of Bānkurā, so far as it is known, prior to the period of British rule, is identical with the history of the rise and fall of the Rājās of Bishnupur, said to be one of the oldest dynasties in Bengal. "The ancient Rājās of Bishnupur," writes Mr. R. C. Dutt, "trace back their history to a time when Hindus were still reigning in Delhi, and the name of Musalmāns was not yet heard in India. Indeed, they could already count five centuries of rule over the western frontier tracts of Bengal before Bakhtiyār Khiljī wrested that province from the Hindus. The Musalmān conquest of Bengal, however, made no difference to the Bishnupur princes. Protected by rapid currents like the Dāmodar, by extensive tracts of scrub-wood and *sāl* jungle, as well as by strong forts like that of Bishnupur, these jungle kings were little known to the Musalmān rulers of the fertile portions of Bengal, and were never interfered with. For long centuries, therefore, the kings of Bishnupur were supreme within their extensive territories. At a later period of Musalmān rule, and when the Mughal power extended and consolidated itself on all sides, a Mughal army sometimes made its appearance near Bishnupur with claims of tribute, and tribute was probably sometimes paid. Nevertheless, the *Sūbahdārs* of Murshidābād never had that firm hold over the Rājās of Bishnupur which they had over the closer and more recent Rājāships of Burdwān and Bīrbhūm. As the Burdwān Rāj grew in power, the Bishnupur family fell into decay; Mahārājā Kirti Chand of Burdwān attacked the Bishnupur Rāj and added to his zamīndāri large slices of his neighbour's territories. The Marāthās completed the ruin of the Bishnupur house, which is an impoverished zamīndāri in the present day. RISE AND FALL OF THE BISHNUPUR RAJ.

"This ancient and renowned family is, of course, a Kshattriya family, and some thousands of people living in all parts of Bānkurā district, and who are descended from the old servants or retainers, soldiers or relations of the Bishnupur Rājās, are Kshattriyas also by caste .... The story by which the Bishnupur Kshattriyas connect themselves with the Kshattriyas of Northern India, is thus told in Dr. Hunter's *Annals of Rural Bengal*:— ORIGIN OF THE RAJAS.

"Raghunāth Singh, the founder of the dynasty of Bishnupur, derives his origin from the kings of Jainagar near Brindāban. The story of his parentage is as follows:—The king of Jainagar, being seized with a desire to visit distant countries, set out for Purushottam, and on his way thither passed through Bishnupur. While resting at one of the halting places in the great forest of that country, his wife gave birth to a son; and the king foreseeing the difficulty of carrying a child with him, left the mother and her baby behind in the woods, and went forward on his journey. Soon after the father had departed, a man named Sri Kasmetia Bāgdi (an aboriginal inhabitant), when gathering fire-wood, passed by the halting place, and saw the newly-born child lying helpless and alone. The mother never was heard of; and whether she was devoured by wild beasts, or found shelter with the natives, remains a mystery to this day. The woodman took the infant home, and reared him till he reached the age of seven, when a certain Brāhman of the place, struck with his beauty and the marks of royal descent that were visible on his person, took him to his house. Soon afterwards, the king (an aboriginal prince) having died, his obsequies were celebrated with great pomp, and people from all parts went to the funeral feast. The Brāhman being very poor went among the rest, taking Raghu with him. When the Brāhman was in the middle of his repast, the late king's elephant seized Raghu with his trunk, and approached the empty throne. Great was the consternation and terror, lest the elephant should dash the boy to pieces; but when the royal animal carefully placed the lad on the throne, the whole multitude, thunder-struck at seeing a deed so manifestly done by the will of God, filled the place with their acclamations, and the ministers agreed to crown the boy on the spot. Raghunāth Singh, therefore, was the first king of Bishnupur."

"Such is the story of the descent of the Bishnupur Kshattriyas from the Kshattriyas of Northern India. If it were not ridiculous to apply the rules of historical criticism to a story which is so apparently a myth, we would ask one or two questions. If Sri Kasmetia Bāgdi, we would enquire, found the child by itself in the forest, how did he (or any one else) know that it was the child of the queen of Jainagar, and not of some unfortunate woman of the neighbourhood who might have better reasons for abandoning her child. If the king of Jainagar, again, found it impossible to carry the new-born child with him, could he not [illegible] ...stablishment with provision to take ...ale child until he returned from ...dence, one is inclined to ask,

beyond the signs which the learned Brāhman observed on the boy's forehead and the conduct of the inspired elephant, to shew that the boy was a Kshattriya boy, and not a Bāgdi boy? And, lastly, is there anything to fix the date or the authenticity of the story, or to show that it was not fabricated when the Rājās of Bishnupur were powerful in Western Bengal and had assumed Hindu civilization, and were anxious, therefore, to make out a respectable royal descent for themselves. But it is needless to make such enquiries; the story is exactly such as is prevalent in all parts of India among semi-aboriginal tribes who connect themselves with Aryan ancestors. The fact that the Rājās of Bishnupur called themselves Mallas (an aboriginal title) for many centuries before they assumed the Kshattriya title of Singh, the fact that down to the present day they are known as Bāgdi Rājās all over Bengal, as well as numerous local facts and circumstances—all go to prove that the Rājās of Bishnupur are Kshattriyas, because of their long independence and their past history, but not by descent. The story of descent is legendary, but the Kshattriyas of Bishnupur can show the same letters patent for their Kshattriyahood as the Rājputs of Northern India or the original Kshattriyas of India could show, viz., military profession and the exercise of royal powers for centuries." *

The country over which these Rājās ruled is called Mallabhūm, MALLA-
a term now used for the tract of country comprised in the thānas BHUM.
of Bānkurā (excluding the Chhātnā outpost), Ondā, Bishnupur, Kotalpur and Indās. Originally, however, the term was applied to a more extensive tract of country. To the north it is believed to have stretched as far as the modern Dāmin-i-koh† in the Santāl Parganas; to the south it comprised part of Midnapore, and to the east part of Burdwān; and inscriptions found at Pānchet in the Mānbhūm district show that on the west it included part of Chotā Nagpur.‡

The term Mallabhūm is said to mean the land of the wrestlers, and is explained by the legend that the first Rājā received the title of Adi Malla from his skill in wrestling. The name Malla (a wrestler) is a Sanskrit one, but it appears more probable that the title is really an aboriginal one. "The name Malla," writes Mr. W. B. Oldham, "is a title of the Rājās of Bishnupur, the acknowledged kings of the Bāgdis, and of the

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* R. C. Dutt, *The Aboriginal Element in the Population of Bengal*, Calcutta Review, 1882.

† W. B. Oldham, *Some Historical and Ethnical Asp*—ts of Northern *District*, Calcutta, 1894.

‡ Reports, Archæological Survey of India, Vol. VIII, pp. 1—*ral Bengal*:—

present Māls who are their neighbours, around whom are centred the most concrete legends which refer to the connection between these two tribes. The Hindu genealogists of the house of Bishnupur assert that this hereditary title Malla means the wrestler, just as Mānbhūm should be Mallabhūm, the land of the wrestlers. As far as I know, except for the mere coincidence of sounds, both assumptions are equally gratuitous." "There is," he further points out, "an intimate connection between the Māls and the Bāgdis. To this day they partake of the same hookah and admit a common origin, and, in the case of Bishnupur, a common sovereign; and my observation of both people leads me to conjecture that the Bāgdis are the section of the Māls who have accepted civilization and life in the cultivated country as serfs and co-religionists of the Aryans; while those Māls who are still found scattered through the Bengal delta, and who are not clearly traceable to the Māls of the hills, are either the descendants of isolated and conservative fragments of the race, or of those members of it who tried to follow the example of the Bāgdis, after the latter had become constituted as a recognized and exclusive caste, and therefore failed."*

To this it may be added that other portions of the district appear also to have been originally the homes of aboriginal races and to have been subdued by military adventurers, who were either aboriginals themselves or Aryan immigrants. Such are Dhalbhūm comprised in the Khātrā thāna, Tungbhūm in the south of the Raipur thāna and Sāmantabhūm in the Chhātnā outpost. The legends connected with these portions of the district will be found in the articles on them in Chapter XIV, and it will be sufficient to state that they were eventually overshadowed by the Malla kings of Bishnupur.

The names of some of these tracts are of considerable antiquity, being found in the *Bramanda* section of the *Bhavishyat Purāna*, which was probably compiled in the 15th or 16th century A.D. "Varāhabhūmi," it says, "is in one direction contiguous to Tungabhūmi, and in another to the Sekhara mountain; and it comprises Varabhūmi, Sāmantabhūmi, and Mānbhūmi. This country is overspread with impenetrable forests of *sāl* and other trees. On the borders of Varabhūmi runs the Dārikesi river. In the same district are numerous mountains, containing mines of copper, iron and tin. The men are mostly Rājputs, robbers by profession, irreligious and savage. They eat snakes, and all sorts of flesh; drink spirituous liquors,

* W. B. Oldham, *Some Historical and Ethnical Aspects of the Burdwān District*, Calcutta, 1894.

and live chiefly by plunder or the chase. As to the women, they are, in garb, manners and appearance, more like Rākshasīs than human beings. The only objects of veneration in these countries are rude village divinities."* Among the chief villages of this tract we find mention of Raipur and two Sārengās. It may be added that the name Varāhabhūmi appears to be preserved in the modern Barābhūm and that the Sekhara mountain is probably Parasnāth. A portion of the Gangājalghāti thāna, which is known as Mahiswarā, forms part of Sekharbhūm, or as it is known locally Sikharbhūm.

The following sketch of the traditional history of the Rājās of Bishnupur has been prepared from an account furnished by the District Officer, which was based on the papers kept by the Rāj family. It differs materially from the *Pandit's Chronicle* given in the *Statistical Account of Bengal* and in the *Annals of Rural Bengal* by Sir William Hunter. **LEGENDARY HISTORY.**

In the year 102 of the Bengali era, *i.e.*, in 695 A.D., a prince of one of the royal houses of Northern India made a pilgrimage with his wife to the shrine of Jagannāth in Purī. While on his way thither, he halted, in the midst of a great forest, at the village of Lāugrām, 6 miles from Kotalpur, and there left his wife, who was about to give birth to a child, in the house of a Brāhman named Panchānan, after arranging that a Kāyasth named Bhagīrath Guha should look after her. He then proceeded on his way, and a few days afterwards his wife gave birth to a son. The mother and child remained at Lāugrām in the care of the Kāyasth, and when the boy reached the age of 7 years, the Brāhman employed him as a cowherd. One day, when, overcome with fatigue, he had fallen asleep under a tree, two huge cobras, raising their hoods above the sleeper's face, shaded him from the rays of the sun, till they were startled away by the approach of Panchānan searching for the boy. Impressed at this wonderful sight, the Brāhman augured that it foretold the future greatness of the boy. Returning to his homestead, he gave orders to his wife that in future the boy should never be given the leavings of their food, and obtained a promise from his mother that, if her son ever became a king, he should be made his *purohit* and the Kāyasth his prime minister. From this time the boy ceased to be a cowherd. Another sign of the greatness in store for him was soon forthcoming; for one day, while fishing with other boys of the village, he caught gold bricks instead of fish. He now received the education of a warrior, and when he was only 15 years old, had no equal in wrestling in all the

* J. Burgess, *Geography of India*, Indian Antiquary, Vol. XX (1891), p. 421.

country round. His skill in this manly art endeared him to an aboriginal ruler called the Rājā of Panchamgarh, and earned for him the sobriquet of Adi Malla, the original or unique wrestler.

The Malla chiefs.

Adi Malla soon became a chieftain owing to the favour of the Rājā of Padampur, a place near the modern village and police outpost of Jaypur, 8 miles from Lāugrām. This Rājā gave a feast to all the Brāhmans round about, to which Panchānan went accompanied by Adi Malla. The boy, being a cowherd, was not allowed to eat with the Brāhmans, but sat outside in the court-yard. The Rājā, attracted by his beauty, held an umbrella over his head to protect him from the sun and rain, whereupon the Brāhmans declared that, since the Rājā himself held the umbrella over him, the boy was destined to become a king. He was then invested with the ensigns of Rājāship, and the Rājā made him a grant of Lāugrām and some villages in its vicinity. One of the first acts of Adi Malla, on returning home, was, we are told, to install the goddess Dandeswarī under the tree where the snakes had raised their hoods to shade him from the rays of the sun. An opportunity for extending his small domains soon occurred, when a neighbouring chief, Pratāp Nārāyan of Jotbihār, withheld the tribute due to his suzerain, the Rājā of Padampur. Adi Malla successfully waged war against him and annexed his territories.

Adi Malla reigned in Lāugrām for 33 years and is known to this day as the Bāgdi Rājā, a designation which seems to show that the district was then inhabited by aboriginal races, over whom he established his rule. He was succeeded by his son Jay Malla, who invaded Padampur and took the Rājā's fort, the possession of which in those days meant the government of the country. To avoid capture by the conqueror, the Padampur royal family perished in the waters of a tank, still in existence, which is known by the name of Kānāisāyar. Jay Malla, having extended his dominions on all sides, removed the capital to Bishnupur.

Of the kings who succeeded him at Bishnupur we have only fragmentary accounts, which serve, however, to show how steadily the borders of their kingdom were extended. The fourth of the line, Kālu Malla, defeated the neighbouring chief of Indās and annexed his territories; the sixth [illegible] Malla, conquered the king of Kākatiā; the seventh, [illegible] trees. On the [illegible] other neighbouring princes; and th[illegible]. In the same district are numerous Bāgri (now a [illegible]aining mines of copper, iron and tin. The men are mostly Rājputs, robbers by profession, irreligious and savage. They eat snakes, and all sorts of flesh; drink spirituous liquors,

* W. B. Oldham, *Some Historical and Ethnical Aspects of the Burdwān District*, Calcutta, 1894.

enshrined the gods. All these kings were known by the title of Malla or Mallābanīnāth, *i.e.*, the lords of Mallabhūm or Mallābanī; and the family records show them as exercising full sovereignty within their domains and independent of all foreign powers. With the reign of the 49th Rājā, Dhār Hāmbīr, who is said to have flourished in 993 B.S. (1586 A.D.), we hear for the first time of the acknowledgment of the suzerainty of the Muhammadan Viceroys of Bengal, to whom this prince paid an annual tribute of Rs. 1,07,000.

Reign of Bīr Hāmbīr.

With the reign of his successor, Bīr Hāmbīr, we enter on more certain ground than that of tradition, for this ruler of a border principality became involved in the struggle between the Mughals and Afghāns, and is mentioned by the Muhammadan historians. The Afghāns had seized Orissa during the revolt of the Mughal troops, and, under the command of Kutlu Khān, had extended their dominion over Midnapore and Bishnupur, leaving the river Dāmodar as the barrier between them and the Mughals (1582).* Kutlu Khān was, however, forced to fall back by the Mughal general Khān Azam, and Bīr Hāmbīr threw in his lot with the Mughals. He rendered them good service in 1591, when the Viceroy, Mān Singh, invaded Orissa. Kutlu Khān advanced to meet Mān Singh, sending forward a large force to Raipur; and a Mughal force under Jagat Singh, the son of the Viceroy, was detached to check this movement. The Afghāns offered to treat, but during the armistice treacherously delivered a night attack. Jagat Singh had been warned by Bīr Hāmbīr of his danger, but, having disregarded his advice, was taken by surprise and forced to abandon his camp. Bīr Hāmbīr rescued him in his flight and brought him safely to Bishnupur.† After this, Bīr Hāmbīr appears to have remained loyal to the Mughals, and suffered for his loyalty; for two years later, when the Afghāns again rose and he refused them any help, they ravaged his territory.‡

Tradition says that Bīr Hāmbīr was as pious as he was powerful, and was converted to Vaishnavism by Srīnivāsa. Two Vaishnava works, the *Prema-vilāsa* of Nityānanda Dās (*alias* Balarām Dās) and the *Bhakti-ratnākara* of Narahari Chakravarti, relate that Srīnivāsa and other *bhaktas* left Brindāban for Gaur with a number of Vaishnava manuscripts, but were robbed on the way by Bīr Hāmbīr. This news killed the old Krishnadās Kabirāj, author of the *Chaitanya-Charitāmrita*. But Srīnivāsa bearded the king in his den, and so moved him by reading the

* C. Stewart, *History of Bengal* (1847), page 112.

† *Akbarnāma*, Dowson's translation, Vol. VI, page 86.

‡ Sir H. Elliot, *History of India*, Vol. VI.

Bhāgavata that he became a convert to Vaishnavism and gave his preceptor rich endowments of land and money. Two Vaishnava songs are attributed to Bīr Hāmbīr, the originals of which are given in the *Bhakti-ratnākara;* and tradition says that he introduced the worship of Madan Mohan in Bishnupur. From these references it would appear that the reign of Bīr Hāmbīr fell between 1591 and 1616.

TRIBUTARY RAJAS.

Bīr Hāmbīr is said to have been succeeded by Raghunāth Singh, the first of the line to assume the Kshattriya title of Singh. The Rājās of Mallabhūm seem now to have entered on their palmiest days, if we may judge by the exquisite memorials left by him and his descendants; and it is probably to this period that we should refer the story that Bishnupur was formerly the most renowned city in the world, more beautiful than the house of Indra in heaven. The beautifully carved temples erected by them shew that the kings ruling in Bānkurā were pious Hindus; but the family records also make it clear that, while they were busy building temples, these royal patrons of Hindu art and religion had lost much of their independence and had sunk to the position of tributary princes. Even the title of Singh was, it is said, conferred by the Nawāb of Murshidābād. The story is that Raghunāth neglected to pay his stipulated tribute and was carried away prisoner to Murshidābād. There one day he saw one of the Nawāb's horses, well known for its savage temper, being taken by 16 soldiers to be washed in the river. The Rājā scoffed at the idea of so many men being required for one horse, and the Nawāb thereupon challenged him to ride the horse himself. This he did, and with the greatest ease rode an incredible distance in a short time, a journey of 8 days, it is said, being finished within 9 hours. Pleased with his skill and courage, the Nawāb conferred on him the title of Singh, remitted the arrears of tribute, and allowed him to return to Bishnupur. The evidence of inscription shews that Raghunāth Singh built the temples of Shyāmrai, Jor Bānglā and Kālāchānd between 1643 and 1656.*

The next prince was Bīr Singh, who is said to have built the present fort, the site of which was indicated by a sign from heaven; for when out hawking he let loose his hawk on a heron sitting on the branch of a tree, and saw the heron strike down the hawk. This seemed an auspicious sign, and he built the fort on the spot. He also had the seven big lakes or tanks, called Lālbāndh,

* The dates of these and other temples mentioned below are those deduced by Dr. Bloch from the inscriptions on the Bishnupur temples. The earliest temple is that known as Malleswar built in 1622 A.D. [Report, Arch. Surv. Ind., 1903-04.]

Krishnabāndh, Gāntātbāndh, Jamunābāndh, Kālindibāndh, Shyāmbāndh, and Pokābāndh excavated, and erected the temple of Lālji in 1658; while his queen Siromani or Chudāmani had the temples of Madan Gopāl and Muralī Mohan built in 1665. While beautifying the town in this way, Bīr Singh took care to keep the subordinate chiefs in order; for, hearing that Monirām Adhvarjya of Māliārā oppressed his people, he marched against him, and defeated him in a bloody battle. Another story about this king does not shew him in such a favourable light, for it is said that he ordered all his sons, eighteen in number, to be walled up alive. The youngest, Durjan Singh, alone escaped, being kept in hiding by the servants. The end of the Rājā was a miserable one, for he committed suicide in horror and remorse in killing a Brāhman boy. He was succeeded by Durjan Singh, the builder of the Madan Mohan temple (1694); and after him the principality was held by Raghunāth Singh, who succeeded in overrunning the Chetebardā (or Chhotabardā) estate in Midnapore for the Muhammadans, who, it is said, had not been able to conquer it themselves and therefore sought the assistance of the Rājā.

RELATIONS WITH THE MUHAMMADANS.

It seems clear from the family records that though the Bishnupur Rājās still continued to pay tribute, they were independent within their own kingdom and that the Muhammadans did not interfere with the internal administration. This claim is confirmed by the Muhammadan historians themselves, who say that when Murshid Kulī Khān, the Nawāb of Bengal, proceeded to introduce a more centralized form of government in 1707-08, only two persons were exempted from his despotic regulations—the chieftains of Bīrbhūm and Bānkurā. The latter, it is expressly stated, "owed his security to the nature of his territory, which was full of woods and adjoined the mountains of Jhārkhand, whither, upon any invasion, he retired to places inaccessible to his pursuers and harassed them severely in their retreat." The country was also unproductive, and the expenses of collection would have exceeded the amount of the revenue. "These two zamīndārs, therefore, having refused the summons to attend at the court of Murshidābād, were permitted to remain on their own estates on condition of regularly remitting their assessment through an agent stationed at Murshidābād."* The status of the Rājā of Bishnupur was thus practically acknowledged as that of a tributary prince, exempted from personal attendance at the court at Murshidābād and represented there by a Resident.

* Stewart's History of Bengal.

MARATHA RAIDS.

The end of the 17th century left the Bishnupur Rājās at the summit of their fortunes. Their territory lay beyond the direct control of the Muhammadan power, and as frontier chiefs they were of so much importance as wardens of the marches, that the Viceroys of Bengal treated them as allies rather than subjects. The first half of the 18th century witnessed the beginning of the downfall of the house. Their power suffered from the aggressions of the Mahārājā of Burdwān, who seized the Fatehpur Mahāl, and from the invasions of the Marāthās, who laid waste their country. Nor were the Rājās who now ruled over Mallabhūm fit to cope with their difficulties. Gopāl Singh, who, we know from official records, held the Rāj between 1730 and 1745, was a pious prince, whose memory is held in veneration to this day by the people of Bishnupur. It was characteristic of this Rājā that he issued an edict that all the people of Mallabhūm should count their beads and repeat the name of god (*Harinām*) every evening at sunset; this evening prayer is still known as *Gopāl Singher begār*. But his religious zeal was not supported by military prowess. During his reign the Marāthās under Bhāskar Rāo appeared before the southern gate of Bishnupur, and after the troops had made a spirited sally, Gopāl Singh retreated inside the fort and ordered both soldiers and citizens to join in prayers to the god of his family to save the city. This prayer was heard, and, legend relates, the guns were fired without human assistance by the god Madan Mohan. The truth probably is that the Marāthā cavalry were unable to pierce the strong fortifications and retired, leaving the Rājā's levies to plunder their abandoned camp.

Baffled in their attempt to seize the fort and pillage the treasury, the Marāthās harried the less protected parts of the country. Their ravages have been graphically described in the *Riyāzu-s-Salātin*:—"Sacking the villages and towns of the surrounding tracts, and engaging in slaughter and captures, they set fire to granaries, and spared no vestige of fertility. And when the stores and granaries of Burdwān were exhausted, and the supply of imported grains was also completely cut off, to avert death by starvation, human beings ate plantain roots, whilst animals were fed on the leaves of trees. Even these gradually ceased to be available. For breakfast and supper nothing except the disc of the sun and the moon feasted their eyes. The whole tract from Akbarnagar (Rājmahāl) to Midnapore and Jaleswar (Jalasore) came into the possession of the Marāthās. Those murderous free-booters drowned in the rivers a large number of the people, after cutting off their ears, noses and hands

Tying sacks of dirt to the mouths of others, they mangled and burnt them with indescribable tortures."*

This encounter with the Marāthās should probably be referred to the year 1742, when the first Marāthā invasion of Bengal took place. Defeated at Kātwā, Bhāskar Rāo retreated to the passes of Pānchet, but having lost his way in the hilly forest-clad tracts, he came back to the jungles of Bishnupur, and thence made good his retreat to Chandrakonā and emerged in the open country round Midnapore.† This was not the last appearance of the Marāthās at Bishnupur, for in 1760 they made it their head-quarters during the invasion of Shāh Alam. Proclaiming that he intended to support the cause of the Emperor, Sheobhat, a Marāthā chief who appears to have been ever ready to take advantage of any troubles in Bengal, suddenly advanced to Midnapore, made himself master of the country and pushed forward a detachment to Bishnupur, from which he threatened Burdwān. The Emperor marched south towards Murshidābād, while Sheobhat came with the main body of Marāthās to Bishnupur. Meanwhile, the Nawāb, Mīr Jafar Khān, having advanced towards Burdwān, effected a junction with a British force under Major Caillaud. The advance of the latter appears to have upset Shāh Alam's plans. Instead of forcing his way to Murshidābād, he drew off his troops, set fire to his camp, and retired with his Marāthā allies to Bishnupur, where the English, having no cavalry and receiving no support from that of the Nawāb, were unable to follow him. Thence the Emperor marched off with Sheobhat to Patna, after receiving the homage of the Rājā of Bishnupur. A small force was left at Bishnupur, but at the close of the year was cleared out by an English force.‡

The effect of the Marāthā raids has been graphically described by Sir William Hunter in the *Statistical Account of Burdwān*:—"Year after year the inexhaustible Marāthā horse overflowed upon the border. Under the Muhammadan system, a family was secure in proportion as it was near the frontier and distant from Court; but now safety could be found only in the heart of the Province. The Marāthās fell with their heaviest weight upon the border principalities of Bīrbhūm and Bishnupur. Tribute, free quarters, forced services, exactions of a hundred sorts, reduced the once powerful frontier houses to poverty; and their tenantry fled from a country in which the peasant had become a mere machine for growing food for the soldier. Burdwān not only

* *Riyāzu-s-Salātin*, Translation by Maulavī Abdus Salām, Calcutta, 1904.

† *Sair-ul Mutākharin*, Raymond's translation.

‡ Broome's History of the Rise and Progress of the Bengal Army.

lay further inland, but its marshy and river-intersected surface afforded a less tempting field for cavalry, and a better shelter for the people. The Marāthās spent their energy in plundering the intervening frontier tracts of Bīrbhūm and Bishnupur, where the dry soil and fine undulating surface afforded precisely the riding ground which their cavalry loved. There they could harry the villages exhaustively, and in detail, by means of small parties."

INTERNAL FEUDS.

The Rājā of Bishnupur at this time was Chaitanya Singh, who shares with Gopāl Singh the fond memories of the people; for he was also a pious ruler and made large grants to Brāhmans, so much so that, if a Brāhman in the Rāj had no rent-free grant, it was open to question whether he was a true Brāhman. But the religious and retiring disposition of Chaitanya Singh made him unfit to deal with the troubles which now arose. He was indifferent to his public duties, spent his time in religious discussion and meditation, and entrusted the direction of State affairs to his favourite minister, Kamal Biswās, better known by the proud title of Chhatrapati. This minister became the real ruler of Mallabhūm, and Dāmodar Singh, a cousin of the Rājā and the head of a junior branch of the house, took advantage of his unpopularity to advance claims to the Rāj. He repaired to the Nawāb's court at Murshidābād and succeeded in obtaining a strong force from Sirāj-ud-daula with which to establish his claims. This force met with an ignominious defeat at Sanghatgolā in the north of Mallabhūm, and Dāmodar Singh narrowly escaped with his life. On his return, he found Mīr Jafar Khān set up in the place of his old patron Sirāj-ud-daula; but the new Nawāb was no less favourable to his cause and furnished him with a stronger force. He then advanced cautiously by stealthy marches and overcoming a feeble resistance on the way, surprised the Bishnupur fort at the dead of night. Chaitanya Singh made good his escape with the family idol of Madan Mohan and wandered from place to place till he reached Calcutta. There, it is said, he pawned the idol to Gokul Mitra of Bāgh Bazar in order to purchase the aid of Dīwān Gangā Gobind Singh.* Through the intercession of the latter, he succeeded in being reinstated by the British.

* According to another account, Gokul Mitra bought the celebrated image of Madan Mohan from the Mahārājā of Bishnupur, paying him three lakhs of rupees, and built a temple for it, the tasteful and costly architecture of which has excited the admiration of experts in Hindu art. A host of men were employed in the service of this deity—worshippers to perform the daily service, florists to supply flowers and to string garlands, priests to recite the sacred books, songsters to sing hymns, and other men and women too numerous to mention. [*The National Magazine*, p. 393, October 1906.]

EARLY BRITISH ADMINISTRATION.

Bānkurā was ceded to the British with the rest of the Burdwān *chaklā* in 1760. The early days of their rule were troubled ones; and we find Mr. Grant in his *View of the Revenues of Bengal* (1788) referring to Bānkurā as "a district celebrated by modern speculative historians for the primitive inoffensive manners of its inhabitants under an Utopian system of internal administration, and distinguished in Bengal as a nest of thieves." The country was impoverished by the raids of the Marāthās, and in 1770 it was desolated by famine. A large portion of the population was swept away; lands fell out of cultivation; distress and destitution drove the people to acts of lawlessness and violence, in which disbanded soldiers lent a willing hand. The old Rājā of Bishnupur had no power to control these elements of disorder. He had been reduced from the position of a tributary prince to that of a mere zamīndār, and being unable to collect his rents and pay his revenue, had been thrown into prison. The state of affairs was as bad, if not worse, in Bīrbhūm to the north, and there was no officer on the spot to restore order, both tracts being governed from Murshidābād. In 1785 we find the Collector of Murshidābād begging for troops to be sent against the banditti who were overrunning this outlying portion of his district, and his representations had some effect. It was realized that the anarchy prevailing demanded the presence of a responsible officer; and in 1786 Mr. Foley was placed in charge of Bīrbhūm and Mr. Pye in charge of Bishnupur. Next year Lord Cornwallis determined to unite Bīrbhūm and Bishnupur into a compact British district; and in March 1787 a notification was issued in the *Calcutta Gazette* to the effect that Mr. Pye was "confirmed Collector of Bishenpore in addition to Beerbhoom heretofore superintended by G. R. Foley, Esq." His tenure of office was brief, for he left the district in April 1787; but even in this short time some towns in Bishnupur were sacked by banditti. His successor was Mr. Sherburne, during whose administration of a year and a half the headquarters of the united district were transferred from Bishnupur to Surī in Bīrbhūm. Short, however, as was his term of office, "the two frontier principalities had passed from the condition of military fiefs into that of a regular British district administered by a Collector and covenanted assistants, defended by the Company's troops, studded with fortified factories, intersected by a new military road, and possessing daily communication with the seat of government in Calcutta."*

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* Hunter's Annals of Rural Bengal.

Early in November 1788 Mr. Sherburne was removed under suspicion of corrupt dealings, and after a short interregnum Mr. Christopher Keating assumed charge of the united district. Of his administration Sir William Hunter has left a picturesque account in the *Annals of Rural Bengal*. "Mr. Keating, the first Collector whose records survive, had not enjoyed his appointment two months before he found himself compelled to call out the troops against a band of marauders five hundred strong, who had made a descent on a market town within two hours' ride from the English capital, and murdered or frightened away the inhabitants of between thirty and forty villages. A few weeks later (February 1789), the hillmen broke through the cordon of outposts *en masse*, and spread their depredations throughout the interior villages of the district. Panic and bloodshed reigned; the outposts were hastily recalled from the frontier passes; and on the 21st of February 1789, we find Mr. Keating levying a militia to act with the regulars against the banditti who were sacking the country towns 'in parties of three and four hundred men, well found in arms' . . .

"The disorders in Bishnupur would, in any less troubled time, have been called rebellion. The Rājā had been imprisoned for arrears of the land-tax; the head assistant to the Collector, Mr. Hesilrige, was in charge of his estates, and the inhabitants made common cause with the banditti to oppose the Government. In June 1789, a detachment was hurried out to support the civil power; eight days afterwards a reinforcement followed, too late however to save the chief manufacturing town in the district from being sacked in open day-light.* Next month Mr. Keating reported to Government that the marauders having crossed the Ajai in a large party armed with *talwārs* (swords) and matchlocks had established themselves in Bīrbhūm, and that their reduction would simply be a question of military force.

"The rainy season, however, came to the aid of the authorities. The plunderers laden with spoil, and leaving a sufficient force to hold Bishnupur as a basis for their operations in the next cold weather, retreated to their strongholds; and Mr. Keating took advantage of the lull to devise a more elaborate system for warding the frontier. He represented to Lord Cornwallis, then Governor General, that the existing military force was insufficient to hold the district; that the contingents furnished by the hereditary wardens of the marches were undisciplined, faint-hearted, more disposed to act with the plunderers than against them; and that to secure peace to the lowlands, it was absolutely necessary to

* Ilāmbāzār on the Ajai in Bīrbhūm.

station a guard of picked soldiers from the regular army at each of the passes. A nucleus would thus be formed round which the irregular troops might gather. By return of post, came back an answer 'that the Commander-in-Chief has been requested to detach' a sufficient force which the Collector 'will station at the different *ghāts* (passes), through which the dacoits generally make their inroads in the low country.' In November, the six most important passes were occupied, a detachment was stationed in Bishnupur, another occupied the chief manufacturing town on the Ajai (the one that had been sacked the previous summer), to prevent the banditti from crossing the river. The Ajai divides the united district into two parts, Bishnupur on the south, Bīrbhūm on the north; and these measures, while they restored comparative quiet to the former, left the latter defenceless.

"Mr. Keating's position was a difficult one. He had to guard Bishnupur on the south of the Ajai, Bīrbhūm on the north, and above all, the passes along the western frontier. Bīrbhūm, as the headquarters of the English power, was of the first importance; but if he called in the troops from Bishnupur, the calamities of the preceding year would be repeated; and if he withdrew the outposts from the western passes, the entire district, north and south, would be at the mercy of the hillmen. He decided that it was better to let the marauders riot for a time on the south of the Ajai, than to open up his entire frontier. An express summoned the detachments from Bishnupur by forced marches to the rescue of Bīrbhūm; but no sooner had they crossed the river than tidings came that Bishnupur was itself in the hands of 'insurgents assembled in number nearly one thousand.'

"The rebellion spread into adjoining jurisdictions, and the Collectors on the south bitterly reproached Mr. Keating with having sacrificed the peace of many districts for the sake of maintaining intact the outposts along the frontier of his own. The more strictly these passes were guarded, the greater the number of marauders who flocked by a circuitous route into the unprotected country on the south of the Ajai. Their outrages passed all bounds; the approaching rains, by suspending military operations, threatened to leave them in possession of Bishnupur for several months; till at last the peasantry, wishing for death rather than life, rose against the oppressors whom they had a year ago welcomed as allies, and the evil began to work its own cure. The marauders of Bishnupur underwent the fate of the Abyssinian slave troops in Bengal three hundred years before, being shut out of the walled cities, decoyed into the woods by twos and threes, set upon by bands of infuriated peasants, and ignobly beaten to

death by clubs. In mid-summer 1790 Mr. Keating ordered the senior captain 'to station a military guard with an officer at Bishenpore, whose sole business I propose to be that of receiving all thieves and dacoits that shall be sent in.'"

At this time, we learn from Mr. Grant's *Analysis of the Finances of Bengal* (written in 1787), the people of Bishnupur were known as *Chuars* or robbers, but were believed to have lived in a state of pristine innocence. He describes them as being "chiefly of the tribe of Chuars or robbers, of a swarthy black, like the neighbouring mountaineers on the north and west supposed to be the aborigines of the country; and though now for the most part received as converts to the blood-abhorring established system of Hindoo faith, are classed among those who continue to follow the savage custom of offering human sacrifices to their Bowanny or female deity named Kally. Mr. Holwell, and afte him, the Abbé Reynal, drew so flattering a picture of the simplicity, pure manners, regular and equitable government which prevailed among the inhabitants of this little canton until with these few years past, that the latter writer could not but enterta doubts himself of the existence of a state which seemed to realize th fable of the golden age. Nor are we to be surprised that th Chuars of Bishenpour, under the influence of so mild a religion the Bramin, should respect the rules of hospitality among the selves, observe good faith with strangers, who solicit and pay f personal protection in passing through their country, or show th most profound veneration for their despotic chief, by yieldin implicit obedience to his civil ordinances. For it is only in respec to the inhabitants of neighbouring States, or as acting from a principle of necessity to gratify natural wants, always so slender in Hindostan, that such people can truly merit the epithets savage or robber, with which they have been and are still usual distinguished."

With this happy state of affairs Mr. Grant compared bitter terms "the tyranny of forcing men in habits of slave to receive the partial blessings of freedom, though to the the greatest curse, as necessarily degenerating in an ungrat ful soil to the wildest licentiousness and anarchy." His view on the native revenue collectors were equally strong; for, wrote in his account of Bishnupur, "the true, effective, abso sway over the persons and property of the people at la is committed, against all the principles of humanity, reas law, policy and justice, to the charge of a small junto of nat collectors, mistaken for princes and hereditary proprietors of lan the most barbarously ignorant and depraved of their species, bei

as tyrannically oppressive to their inferiors, forming the great mass of useful subjects to the State, as they are themselves abject slaves to superior authority, especially when employed in the basest schemes of corruption or merciless depredation on the private property of individuals, unprotected and incapable of making any hostile resistance." It would appear that Mr. Grant preferred the old Hindu system of administration by means of hereditary leaders of the people, for elsewhere he wrote regarding the Rājā of Bishnupur:—"In truth, the possessor of this little district had pretensions of heritable jurisdiction or territorial rights, with the exception of two or three other individuals in the same predicament, infinitely superior to any in Bengal, and known by the ordinary appellation of zemindar. It seems only unfortunate, though I do not deny the expediency of the measure, that the strong hand of British power hath almost exclusively been exerted in reducing to the common level those who could pride themselves on some real pre-eminence of birth or independence, while such as had none to boast of have been negligently suffered presumptuously to raise their heads above the standard of regal control and beyond law, right, equity, or policy."*

The Rājā of Bishnupur, reduced to the state of an ordinary zamīndār, was soon to lose what vestiges of former greatness he still retained. Already impoverished by the Marāthā raids, the resources of the family were still further reduced by the famine of 1770, during which more than half of its estates relapsed into jungle. The earlier years of British administration intensified rather than relieved its difficulties. The Rājās insisted upon maintaining a military force which was no longer required under English rule, and for the support of which their revenues were altogether inadequate. The new system protected them from Marāthā raids and Muhammadan oppression, but, on the other hand, it sternly put down their own irregular exactions from the peasantry, enforced the punctual payment of land revenue, and realized arrears by sale of the hereditary estates. The Bishnupur family never recovered from the indigence to which it had been reduced by the famine of 1770, and its ruin was completed by family disputes, costly litigation, and a crushing revenue. As noted above, Dāmodar Singh had driven out Chaitanya Singh and possessed himself of the estate, but a military force sent by Government restored the fugitive. Afterwards, Dāmodar Singh was declared to be entitled to half of the Rāj by the decision of an officer resident at Murshidābād; but the Rājā appealed to the

* Fifth Report from the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company.

Governor-General, and in 1787 had a decree given in his favour, confirming him in possession and declaring Dāmodar Singh to be entitled only to maintenance. This decree was dated 1787, but in 1791 a new decision was notified by which the estate was again divided between the contending parties. Ruinous litigation ensued, and eventually a compromise was effected by which the Rājā secured the bulk of the property.*

But, in the meantime, the Rājā had still further involved himself by engaging at the decennial settlement for the payment of a revenue of 4 lakhs of sicca rupees, a sum which he was utt[illegible]ly unable to pay. Between 1730 and 1745 the Rājā had pa[illegible] the Muhammadan Government a revenue of Rs. 1,29,803 this was reduced in consideration of the Marāthā devastati[illegible] Rs. 1,11,803. In 1759 it had been raised again to its f[illegible] standard, and in 1767 had been increased to Rs. 1,61,044. [illegible] next find that in 1772 "under the auspices of a British Su[illegible] visor, the constitutional mode of settlement, by a regular *hast*[illegible] seems to have been adopted with considerable advantage in[illegible] of income, notwithstanding the ravages of the famine; [illegible] 1773, the highest complete valuation of the whole ter[illegible] capable of realization, appears to have been ascertained thu[illegible] gressively, and then fixed in gross at sicca rupees 4,51,750."[illegible]

Before the decennial settlement of 1790, a special commi[illegible] enquired into the assets of the country, the result, according to [illegible] Collector of Burdwān, being that "many advantages enjoye[illegible] is said, from time immemorial, either as appendages to the sta[illegible] the ancient Rājās or connived at by the Muhammadan Gove[illegible] ment, were abolished, or resumed as inconsistent with the defi[illegible] tion established of proprietary right; and the gross assets of [illegible] country being rated at about sicca rupees 4,60,259, the propriet[illegible] were adjudged entitled to one-eleventh part only of the [illegible] estimated collections. But under the *khās* collections of that y[illegible] the country yielded much less than the estimated produce, [illegible] only sicca rupees 4,09,000. At this conjuncture, Chait[illegible] Singh being called upon or make his decennial settle[illegible] engaged for a net *jamā* of sicca rupees 4,00,000, being fearfu[illegible] his adversary Dāmodar Singh might supersede him with an [illegible] of that amount; but falling in arrears at the end of the [illegible]

* According to Sir William Hunter, the Judge who decided one [illegible] suits was "an ingenuous stripling of nineteen, with whom 'equity and goo[illegible] ence' were supposed to make up for the want of a legal training and a total [illegible] of the law." (*Annals of Rural Bengal.*)

† Fifth Report from the Select Committee on the Affairs of the [illegible] Company.

more than half the zamīndāri was sold to realize the balance, and thereby his adversary, who in the interim had been declared entitled to half the estate, was equally involved."*

The costly litigation in which they were engaged completed the ruin of the family, and eventually in 1806 the estate was sold for arrears of land revenue and bought up by the Mahārājā of Burdwān. Their estates thus lost, the family were dependent upon small pensions granted by Government and upon what little *debottar* property they had. Their descendants, who live at Bishnupur, Jāmkundī, Indās and Kuchiākol, are now in reduced circumstances; but they retain a strong hold on the affections of the people, and it is not forgotten that their ancestors were the rulers of the land.†

Bānkurā continued to form one district with Bīrbhūm until 1793, when it was transferred to the Burdwān Collectorate. An idea of the duties devolving on the District Officer may be gathered from Sir William Hunter's account in the *Annals of Rural Bengal*. "Mr. Christopher Keating, as Collector, Magistrate, and Civil Judge, ruled with an absolute sway over 7,500 square miles, and made his policy felt by the hill tribes many a day's march beyond his frontier. The district naturally ...ided itself into two parts—the Rājā of Bīrbhūm's terri...ly on the north of the Ajai and the Rājā of Bishnupur's ...o the south. Mr. Keating directed the movements of the ...ops, received the rent of the cultivators, decided civil suits, ...veyed for military detachments passing through his dis...ict, inflicted punishment on petty offenders, sent heinous ones ... chains to the Muhammadan law officer, and acted as cashier to ... great commercial company. It would be unreasonable to look ...r perfect finish in walls whose builders held the plummet ... one hand and the sword in the other: and if the administration ... such men as Mr. Keating was effective on the whole, it is as ...ch as an after generation, which works at greater leisure and ...h more complete machinery, has a right to expect."

In the last two years of the 18th century the south-west of the district, which is now comprised in the Raipur thāna, was in ... disturbed state in consequence of what is known as the ...*ar* rebellion. In May 1798 it was found necessary to send a ... of sepoys to keep the peace in this tract. Next month a ... of 1,500 *Chuars* made their appearance at Raipur, set fire to ... bazar and *kachahri*, and overran the place. Reinforcements **THE *Chuar* REBELLION.**

* Fifth Report from the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company.

† See also the article on Bishnupur in Chapter XIV.

were sent up under a native commissioned officer, but were beaten back by the banditti; and a company of sepoys was then detached under an European officer. But the zamīndārs would neither supply them with provisions nor give information regarding the *Chuars*, to whom they gave shelter in their mud forts. Not unnaturally, complaints were made that the sepoys sent to repel the *Chuars* plundered the ryots; and after some time the force returned to Midnapore. The principal leader of the rebels appears to have been one Durjan Singh, the ex-zamindār of Raipur, who had at one time a following of 1,500 men, with whom he raided the country, effectually preventing the purchaser from gaining possession of the estate. He was apparently once captured after he had attacked, plundered and burnt some 30 villages; but when he was put on trial, he had to be released because no one dared to appear against him. He resumed his marauding career and was a prominent figure in the disturbances of 1799.

In that year we find that *parganas* Ambikānagar and Supur were also overrun by the *Chuars*, and the Collector reported that the country could not be effectually protected from their incursions till a complete change was made in the police system. The *dārogās* with a few attendants could not make any resistance against the *sardārs* or leaders of the *Chuars*, who lived in remote and almost inaccessible places, and were sure to make their appearance whenever the country in their neighbourhood was unprotected, and to commit all sorts of depredations. All they could possibly do was to send intelligence to the Magistrate, and a detachment of sepoys was then generally deputed, with whom the *Chuars* never ventured to engage. The result was that in the course of a fortnight the troops were recalled, leaving the country worse than before.*

JUNGLE MAHALS.

At this time Bānkurā appears to have been known as part of the Jungle Mahāls, a vague term applied in the 18th century to the British possessions and some dependent chiefdoms lying between Bīrbhūm, Bānkurā, Midnapore and the hilly country of Chotā Nāgpur. As the system of administration was not precise, inconvenience was caused by the vagueness of the jurisdiction in these tracts; and in 1805 a regulation (Regulation XVIII of 1805) was passed, by which the districts called the Jungle Mahāls, situated in the *zilās* of Bīrbhūm, Burdwān and Midnapore, were separated from the jurisdiction of the Magistrates of the

* This account has been compiled from *The Chuar Rebellion of 179[illegible]* Mr. J. C. Price (Calcutta, 1874).

zilās, and placed under the jurisdiction of an officer called the Magistrate of the Jungle Mahāls. The district thus formed was composed of 23 *parganas* and *mahāls*, of which fifteen, including Pānchet, were transferred from Bīrbhūm; three were transferred from Burdwān, viz., Senpahāri, Shergarh and Bishnupur, excepting the police circle of Kotalpur, and the contiguous *pargana* of Bālsī, which remained under the jurisdiction of the Magistrate of Burdwān; and five were transferred from Midnapore, viz., Chhātnā, Barābhūm, Mānbhūm, Supur, Ambikānagar, Simlāpāl and Bhālāidihā. It was further provided that the half-yearly jail deliveries for the Jungle Mahāls should be holden by one of the Judges of the Court of Circuit for the Division of Calcutta, and that the Jungle Mahāls should continue subject in all matters of civil cognizance to the courts of *Dīwāni Adālat* for the respective *zilās* to which they had hitherto been attached.

Some interesting details of the district as thus constituted are given in a register of "The established offices, places and employments appertaining to the Civil Departments under the Bengal Government on the part of the Hon'ble the United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies" for 1813. The Judge and Magistrate of the Jungle Mahāls *zilā* was Alexander Bruere Todd, drawing pay of Rs. 2,333, who was assisted by a Registrar, Thomas Pakenham, on Rs. 500 and an Assistant Surgeon on Rs. 300. The headquarters were at Bānkurā, and there were seven thānas transferred from Burdwān and two from Midnapore, viz., Chhātnā and Bara Sārengā. The annual cost of judicial establishment was Rs. 7,347, including police and contingencies; and we find entries of Rs. 11,160 payable to the zamīndār of Bishnupur and his family, and of Rs. 476 paid as allowances to 19 zamīndārs employed to act as police officers in Pānchet (described as lately under the Bīrbhūm Magistrate). The revenue administration of the district was supervised by the Burdwān Collector, but was under the direct control of Mr. Pakenham, who is described as *ex-officio* Assistant stationed at Bānkurā, drawing pay of Rs. 200 a month.

In the same register we find entries showing that Bānkurā played an important part in the commercial department of the East India Company. Sonāmukhī was a head factory with 31 subordinate *aurungs*, among which were Surul and Ilāmbāzār in Bīrbhūm and Patrasāyar in this district. There were also sugar establishments at Sonāmukhī, Bishnupur and Patrasāyar, besides a large sugar factory at Surul. All these commercial establishments were under the control of John Cheap, who is entered as Resident of the head factory of Sonāmukhī, the date

of his appointment being shown as December 1797, while his salary is shown as Rs. 500, besides house rent of Rs. 120 and commission, which in 1812-13 amounted to Rs. 2,493. This appears to be the John Cheap known as "Cheap the Magnificent," whom Sir William Hunter has done so much to immortalize in the *Rural Annals of Bengal.* "The whole industrial classes were in his pay, and in his person Government appeared in its most benign aspect. A long unpaid retinue followed him from one factory to another, and as the procession defiled throughout the hamlets, mothers held aloft their children to catch a sight of his palanquin, while the elders bowed low before the providence from whom they derived their daily bread. Happy was the infant on whom his shadow fell!" Trade apparently flourished, and the change from the lawless state of affairs which prevailed a generation before is apparent from the fact that in an article on the Jungle Mahāls in Hamilton's *Hindostan* (1820) it is stated that "the name of this district implies a waste territory in a backward stage of civilization, yet it appears from the report of the Circuit Judge in 1815 that no instances of gang robbery had occurred during the six previous months."

RISING OF 1832. Bānkurā continued to form part of the Jungle Mahāls till 1833, when it was separated on account of the disturbances which took place in 1832 in the west of the district. These disturbances were caused by an outbreak of the Bhumijes of the Jungle Mahāls, who enjoyed the nickname of *Chuars* or robbers and had long been the terror of the surrounding districts. They were ready to rise at the slightest provocation, whether to support a turbulent chief ambitious of obtaining power to which he was not entitled, or to oppose Government in a policy of which they disapproved. The rising of 1832 was due to a disputed succession in Barābhūm, an estate claimed by Gangā Nārāyan. Aggrieved at the decision of the courts, Gangā Nārāyan raised the standard of rebellion, and the Bhumijes of Barābhūm and the adjoining estates rose in support of him. The officials and police fell back to Burdwān, and for some time Gangā Nārāyan had the whole country at this mercy, sacking every place worth plundering. At last a strong force was collected, and military operations ag… the insurgents commenced. They were soon driven to take … in the hills, but, being pressed there also, Gangā Nārāy… to Singhbhūm, where he died. This rising is still known as the *Gangā Nārāyanī Hāngāmā.*

As a result of these disturbances, a change of admi… was determined upon; and by Regulation XIII of … district of the Jungle Mahāls was broken up. The co…

Diwāni Adālat of the Jungle Mahāls was abolished, the estates of Senpahāri, Shergarh and Bishnupur were transferred to Burdwān, and the remainder, with the estate of Dhalbhūm, which was detached from Midnapore, were formed into the present district of Mānbhūm. At the same time, the country was withdrawn from the regular system of administration and placed under an officer called the Principal Assistant to the Agent to the Governor-General for the South-West Frontier. The effect of this measure was that practically the whole of the west of the present district of Bānkurā was included within Mānbhūm; and a map of 1844 shews the eastern boundary of the South-West Frontier Agency as extending close to Bānkurā town. The remainder of the district as now constituted was formed into a district, known as West Burdwān, in 1835-36. The latter had its headquarters at Bānkurā, and extended as far east as Kotalpur, while to the west, Chhātnā, Supur, and Ambikānagar formed part of the South-West Frontier Agency.

Mutiny of 1857.

The subsequent history of Bānkurā presents little of interest. During the Mutiny the district remained tranquil and free from disturbance. There was for some time much apprehension regarding the Sheikhawati Battalion, of which a detachment was stationed at Bānkurā, an uneasiness increased by the vicinity of Chotā Nāgpur, where the main body was, and by a fear of an outbreak amongst the *Chuars* and Santāls inhabiting the country about Bānkurā. The distrust of the Battalion appears, however, to have passed away gradually; and in October, when there was again some fear of an outbreak among the Santāls, a wing was gladly welcomed at Bānkurā and served to allay the anxiety that was felt. Towards the end of October confidence was so far restored that the Magistrate at Bānkurā proposed to dismiss an extra establishment of *barkandāzes* which he had been allowed to entertain.

FORMATION OF DISTRICT.

The only other matter calling for mention is the formation of the district. At the time of the Mutiny, Bānkurā included only the eastern half of the present district. The town of Bānkurā was on its extreme western boundary, and the western half, including [illegible]rly all the country to the west of the Bānkurā-Rānīganj road [illegible] the Bānkurā-Khātrā road, belonged to Mānbhūm. Subse[illegible]ly, numerous changes in the jurisdiction of the district took [illegible] which need not be particularized; and it will be sufficient [illegible] that in 1872 the *parganas* of Sonāmukhī, Indās, Kotalpur, [illegible]rh and Senpahāri on the east, were transferred to Burdwān, [illegible]n the west the police circle of Chhātnā was separated from [illegible]m and added to Bānkurā. In 1877, when the *Statistical*

Account of Bengal was published, the district, as then constituted, contained an area of only 1,346 square miles; but in October 1879, the thānas of Khātrā and Raipur and the Simlāpāl outpost, corresponding with *parganas* Supur, Ambikānagar, Raipur, Syāmsundarpur, Phulkusmā, Simlāpāl and Bhālāidihā, were transferred from the Mānbhūm district, and thānas Sonāmukhī, Kotalpur and Indās were re-transferred from the Burdwān district. The district thus acquired its present dimensions. The District Judgeship, however, was still known as West Burdwān, and it was not till 1881 that it was given the name of Bānkurā.

BISHNUPUR OR MALLA ERA.

"From an historical point of view," writes Dr. Bloch, "perhaps the most curious fact in connection with the Malla Rājās of Bishnupur is that they used a separate era of their own, called Malla *saka* in the inscriptions. I have not found any information about this era either in Prinsep's Useful Tables or in Cunningham's Book of Indian Eras. In one only of the temple inscriptions the equivalent of Malla *saka* 1064 is given as *saka* 1680, and thus the difference between the Malla era and the Bengali *sāl* appears to be exactly 100 years. I suspect that the Malla year in other respects entirely followed the *fasli* year of Bengal, and the Rājās of Bishnupur, out of vain glory, merely reduced the Bengali year by one hundred in order to establish a special era of their own. But this conjecture remains to be verified."*

According to local reports, the Malla era, which also went by the name of Mallabdāh and is locally known as the Bishnupur era, dates back to the establishment of the Rāj by Adi Malla, and the difference between it and the Bengali era is 101 years, *i.e.*, the first year of the Malla era is 101 of the Bengali era. It is employed in all the twelve temple inscriptions that still remain at Bishnupur, and also in the title deeds of the Rāj preserved in the Government offices at Bānkurā.

ARCHÆOLOGY.

The most interesting remains found in the district are at Bishnupur, where there are a number of temples representing the most complete set of specimens of the peculiar Bengali style of temple architecture. There are other temples of archæological interest at Bāhulārā, Ekteswar and Sonātāpol, and remains of forts are found at Karāsurgarh, Asurgarh and Syāmsundargarh.

* Report, Archæological Survey, Bengal Circle, 1903-04.

CHAPTER III.

THE PEOPLE.

GROWTH OF POPULATION. THE first census was taken in 1872, and the result was to shew, for the district as now constituted, a population of 968,597 persons. During the next decade there was an increase of 7·5 per cent., the number of inhabitants in 1881 being returned at 1,041,752. The advance during the next ten years was not so marked, owing to the prevalence of disease, but by 1891 the population had risen to 1,069,668, the increase being only 2·7 per cent. The succeeding decade was, on the whole, a healthy one, the great epidemic of fever known as Burdwān fever having died out; and the census of 1901 showed a total population of 1,116,411, representing an increase of 4·37 per cent.

On a general survey of the growth of population during the 30 years over which the census figures extend, it is noticeable that between 1872 and 1891 the population of the headquarters subdivision increased by 21 per cent., while that of the Bishnupur subdivision declined by more than 8 per cent. At first sight, this result appears somewhat surprising, for the headquarters subdivision is an undulating tract of rocky, often barren soil, whereas the Bishnupur subdivision is a fertile alluvial plain. The difference in the rate of progress is probably due to climatic conditions; for in the headquarters subdivision the undulating uplands are well-drained and the people suffer little from malarial infections, while the Bishnupur subdivision is a low-lying tract [illegible]h an unhealthy and malarial climate. The latter subdivision, moreover, suffered between 1872 and 1891 from the Burdwān [illegible]r, which was introduced from the adjoining thānas of Galsi and Khandghosh in Burdwān and caused a very heavy mortality; [illegible]reas its westward course was checked on reaching the high [illegible]nd in the west. The ravages of Burdwān fever have now [illegible]; and the result is that in 1901, for the first time since [illegible] operations were introduced, the Bishnupur subdivision [illegible] an increase of population.

CENSUS OF 1901. [illegible] results of the census of 1901 are summarized as follows [illegible] Bengal Census Report of 1901. "The Bishnupur [illegible] has increased by 7 per cent., so that it has now nearly

recovered the combined losses of the two previous decades, but the headquarters subdivision has added less than 3 per cent. to its population. This is due to the movements of the people. The immigrants from outside the district are fewer by about 13,000 than they were ten years ago, while emigrants have increased by more than 38,000. The emigrants are for the most part hardy aborigines from the south and east of the district, who find the high pay obtainable on the coal-fields of Asansol or the distant tea gardens of Assam a more attractive prospect than a penurious livelihood laboriously extracted from the unwilling soil of their native uplands. There is also a considerable amount of temporary migration on the part of the semi-Hinduized tribes in the south and west of the district, who supplement their scanty harvests by working as labourers in the metropolitan districts, when they have no crops to look after. They leave home in December after the winter rice has been reaped, and do not return till the monsoon breaks. This temporary emigration was greatly stimulated in the cold weather, when the census was taken, by the short harvest of that year, and this accounts to a great extent for the falling off in the population of Raipur and the very small increase in other thānas in the south of the district. But for these movements of the people, the growth of the population would have been two or two-and-a-half times as great as that recorded at the census."

The principal statistics of this census are shown in the table below:—

Subdivision.	Area in square miles.	Number of		Population.	Population per square mile.	Percentage of variation in populati[on] between 1891 and 1[…]
		Towns.	Villages.			
Bānkurā ...	1,921	1	4,069	712,055	371	+2·85
Bishnupur ...	700	2	1,523	404,356	578	+7·17
District Total	*2,621*	*3*	*5,592*	*1,116,411*	*426*	*+4·3[…]*

General Characteristics.

Density of population.

Bānkurā is the most thinly populated district in the Bur[…] Division, supporting a population of only 426 persons t[…] square mile. The density of population is greatest [i…] Bishnupur subdivision, where it rises to 727 persons to the […] mile in the Kotalpur thāna and to 664 per square mil[…] Indās thāna; both these tracts are alluvial flats almos[…] under cultivation. The Bānkurā subdivision supports […] persons to the square mile, and the population is ver[…]

the western tracts, which are of a hilly undulating character with large areas under jungle.

Migration. Emigration is unusually active in Bānkurā. The statistics of the census of 1901 show that no less than 13 per cent. of the population of the district were enumerated outside it. Nowhere in Bengal, except in the Rānchī district, is the proportion of emigrants so great: in fact, it is estimated that the increase of 4·37 per cent. recorded at the last census represents less than half of what would have been registered but for the volume of emigration. This exodus is partly permanent and partly periodic or semi-permanent, the inhabitants seeking a hospitable home elsewhere or going to eke out their earnings in the metropolitan districts during the cold weather months. The southern part of the district has suffered most by the exodus of the people; and it is reported that in the extreme south it has not only retarded progress, but actually reduced the population. The labouring classes, especially those of aboriginal or semi-aboriginal descent, are chiefly attracted to the eastern districts by the high wages offered there, but their absence from home is mostly temporary. After securing their little stock of grain, they leave home in the latter end of December and proceed to the eastern districts (*Nāmāl**) in search of employment, and generally return with their savings before the rains set in to meet the local demand for agricultural labour. Large numbers are attracted to the docks near Calcutta, the mills along the Hooghly, and the mines in Burdwān and Mānbhūm. There is also a certain amount of emigration to the Assam tea gardens, which will be dealt with in Chapter XI.

The volume of immigration is small, only 2·6 per cent. of the population being returned as immigrants at the last census. [illegible]nlike the adjoining districts of Burdwān and Mānbhūm, there [illegible]e no mining centres, the few small coal mines that exist being [illegible]rked by local labour and in no way affecting the population. [illegible]ost of the immigrants are inhabitants of the neighbouring [illegible]tricts; and the immigrants from distant places are mainly the [illegible]āris, who are employed as peons, *darwāns*, etc.

Towns and villages. The district is almost entirely agricultural, and there are only [illegible] towns, Bānkurā, Bishnupur and Sonāmukhī, with an aggre-[illegible] population of 53,275, or 5 per cent. of the total population. [illegible] towns are unprogressive, of little commercial importance, [illegible] the whole distinctly rural in character. The remainder [illegible] population is contained in 5,592 villages, most of which are

* [illegible] term *Nāmāl* means lowlands in contradistinction to the highland [illegible]. It is used by the labouring classes with special reference to the districts [illegible] and Howrah and the eastern portion of the Burdwān district.

of small size, 68 per cent. of the rural population living in villages containing less than 500 inhabitants. The character of the villages differs considerably in the east and west of the district. In the east, where much of the land is rich loam, able to support a numerous population, we find the closely packed villages of Bengal, surrounded by picturesque groves of trees. In the undulating tract to the west, where the ridges afford healthy sites for villages and the inhabitants are to a large extent Santāls, Bāgdis and Bauris, the closely packed hog-backed huts of the Bengalis give place to the mud walls and straight roofs characteristic of Santāl clearings; while in the hilly broken country bordering on Chotā Nāgpur nothing is seen but small scattered hamlets.

Language. The language current in the district is the dialect known as *Rārhi boli*, or Western Bengali, which is also spoken in Burdwān, Bīrbhūm, Mānbhūm, Singhbhūm and the 24-Parganas. *Rārhi boli*, it may be explained, means the language spoken in Rārh, *i.e.*, the country lying to the west of the Bhāgīrathī river and south of the Ganges. This dialect was returned in 1901 as the language of 90·7 per cent. of the population. Santāli was spoken by nearly 9 per cent., and as the Santāls account for 9·5 per cent of the population, it would appear that they still nearly al retain their tribal language. Mundāri was also returned as th language of a few Korās.

RELIGIONS. Altogether 975,746 persons or 87·4 per cent. of the popula tion are Hindus. 89,157 or 8 per cent. are Animists, and 51,11 or 5·6 per cent. are Muhammadans. Other religions have onl a few representatives, there being 363 Christians according t the census of 1901, while the followers of all other religion number only 31.

Christian Missions. The first Christian missionary who worked in the district the Rev. Mr. Weitbrecht of the Church Missionary Socie who used to visit the town of Bānkurā from Burdwān as back as 1840. He never resided in the town, but established s schools, the chief of which subsequently became the Zilā Sch The Wesleyan Mission began work at Bānkurā in 1870, has now several stations in the district, of which an acco given below. The only other mission in the district is on on by some American missionaries who, some years an orphanage in the neighbourhood of Mejiā, Premānanda Orphanage, which is said to contai children.

Wesleyan Mission. The Rev. J. Mitchell, Principal of the Bānk College, has kindly furnished the following accour

of the Mission, of which there are three branches—educational, evangelistic and social.

Educational work. In the year 1870 the Rev. John Richards opened a school at Kuchkuchiā in Bānkurā, and this institution has continued with varying fortunes up to the present time. In 1889 a High School department was added to the existing Middle School, and these two departments worked side by side until 1899, when the Middle School was abolished and the school was converted into a High School recognized by the University and aided by Government. Both educationally and financially the High School has been a great success, for year after year the percentage of passes in the Entrance Examination has been higher than in most of the schools in the district, and numerically the school has stood easily first during the last three years :—at the end of the year 1906 there were 330 names on the roll. Owing partly to the continued success of the Kuchkuchiā High School, but more particularly to the demand for higher education in the district, college classes were commenced in the High School building in June 1903; but the number rose so rapidly that it was soon found impossible to continue the work in the school building, and the classes were transferred to the Central Hall, a spacious building belonging to the Mission, which stands in a fine position in the middle of the town. From its inception the college has been most successful, and though owing to the reorganisation of the University, it had to wait four years for affiliation, the percentage of passes in the First Arts Examination has been remarkably high, 91 students having passed that examination up to date (1907). In order to meet the requirements of the University, it has been found necessary to make preparations for the erection of a separate college building, and several other buildings will be necessary in connection with the college scheme. A fine site of 115 *bighās* has been obtained, on which it is intended to erect a new college, a hostel for Hindu students, a Christian hostel, the house for the Principal, and other buildings when needed. ...h progress has already been made. The Principal's house is ...lete; the foundation of the college has been laid; and a fine ...ation ground of nearly 10 *bighās* has been prepared. The ... now affiliated up to the B. A. Examination in Arts, and ... has been asked to grant permission for teaching ... to this end, provision is being made in the new ... that the students may have both theoretical and ...ing.

... to higher education, attention is being paid to ...ion both among boys and girls. In the Mission

compound there is a well-built and well-equipped boarding school for Christian girls. The teaching is carried on up to the Middle Vernacular standard, and there is also a teachers' training department. This school has had a most successful career, and trained teachers are being turned out year after year to carry on the work in the various girls' schools in the district. Though the boarders are all Christians, Hindu girls are also admitted as day students. The Mission has also under its care three girls' schools in the town with Christian teachers in charge. At Ondā, a large village 10 miles south of Bānkurā, there is another girls' school, and at Bishnupur, where the Mission has a Mission House and a fine property, there are five girls' schools. There is also a flourishing Middle English school at Ondā in charge of a catechist, who is directly under a European missionary, the latter also supervising the work carried on in the neighbourhood of Bishnupur. This school receives a grant from the District Board, and a considerable sum of money is being spent on the building to make it better adapted for modern requirements.

There are several Primary schools under the care of the Mission; and in the Bānkurā Mission compound there is a Middle Vernacular school, at which boys are taught up to the Middle Vernacular standard and also receive practical instruction in carpentry, cane and bamboo work, or shoe-making. There is one difficulty in connection with this school, and that is, to induce students to take up the technical side. With Christian boys there is no difficulty, but Hindu boys, whether high caste or low caste, do not take kindly to work that does not fall within the scope of their caste. One branch of technical work that is being carried on amongst the girls and women of the Mission should be specially mentioned, viz., drawn-thread work. The work was commenced about 2 years ago in order to find employment for the female portion of the community, and has proved most successful. Many of the girls and women already do exquisite work, and some of them can earn as much as Rs. 7 a month in this way. There is a ready sale for the work in England, and the prices obtained are such that this department is self-supporting.

Evangelistic work.

Systematic evangelistic work was commenced in Bānkurā by the Rev. J. R. Broadhead in the year 1877, but as far back as 1840, the station was visited by Mr. Weitbrecht of the Church Missionary Society from Burdwān. The work is carried on in the town of Bānkurā and the surrounding villages by a staff of native workers under European supervision, and at present the Christian community numbers about 400. The Mission staff in

Bānkurā consists of three European missionaries, one native minister, four catechists and a number of other workers.

In the south-west corner of the district there is another branch of the Wesleyan Mission with its headquarters at Sārengā near Raipur, where for the last 8 years educational and evangelistic work has been vigorously carried on by the Revd. G. E. Woodford; the Christian community there now numbers over 300. In the Mission compound there is a flourishing boys' boarding school with about 40 boys, most of whom are Santāl Christians, but non-Christian Santāl and Hindu boys are also admitted. Teaching is given up to the Middle Vernacular standard, and the school has an excellent record, a large number of scholarships having been won. Specially promising boys are sent to the Bānkurā Mission High School, and one Santāl Christian boy has passed the Entrance examination. In addition to the boys' school, there is a girls' school in the compound, at which about 50 girls study under the care of a trained Christian teacher from the Bānkurā Female Training School. The Upper Primary examination is the standard of this school, but particularly bright girls continue their education in the Bānkurā girls' school. There are also several Primary schools scattered throughout the south-west of the district.

An interesting feature of this branch of the Mission is that a considerable area of land has been acquired, on which a number of Christian families have been settled. Not many years back the male members of these families were the terror of the neighbourhood, but a great change has come over them. They are now settling down most satisfactorily, earning an honest livelihood, and becoming respected members of the community.

The social work of the Mission is carried on in connection with the Leper Asylum, which is under the supervision of members of the Mission. An account of this Asylum will be found in the next chapter. Social work.

Muhammadans are found in greatest strength in the Bishnupur subdivision, and especially in the thānas bordering on Burdwān, viz., Kotalpur and Indās, which account for nearly one-half of the total number. They are Sunnis belonging to the Hānifi sect, and the majority are believed to be descendants of local converts. Of the total number no less than 43,603 are Sheikhs, and the number of Mughals and Pathāns is very few. Muhammadans.

The veneration of Pīrs or saints is common among the local Muhammadans, who frequent their shrines and make offerings of sweetmeats, in order that the Pīrs may look with favour upon them and grant them the fulfilment of their desires. It is

reported that many Hindus have the same belief in the supernatural powers of Pīrs, and also make offerings at their shrines. The following are reported to be the shrines of the Pīrs who hold the highest place in popular esteem. In the Indās thāna there are no less than eight shrines, viz., that of Shāh Madār in Rol, Bandegi Shāh Mustaphā in Chichingā, Saiyad Muhammad Husain and Shāh Kabīr in Karisundā, Satya Pīr in a field south of Hayātnagar, Burā Pīr in Chak Sukur, Shāh Bandegi in Bihār, and Shāh Ismail Ganj Lashkar in Lakhipur. There are also shrines of the Pīr last named at Pātharchatī in the Kotalpur thāna, and at Pīrpuskarnī Fakīrbera in the Gangājalghāti thāna; and in the town of Bishnupur there is a shrine of a Pīr called Shāh Kaubān Alī.

Animists.

The Animists are almost entirely represented by the Santāls, whose religious beliefs have been so exhaustively treated elsewhere that it is unnecessary to recapitulate them here.

Some aspects of Hinduism.

In Bānkurā, lying, as it does, between the highlands of Chotā Nāgpur, the home of Animistic races, and the civilized Gangetic valley inhabited by Hindus, the Hinduism of the lower classes exhibits a marked mixture of the Animism of the aboriginal races and the higher monotheism of the Aryan Hindus. A very large proportion, moreover, of the population consists of semi-Hinduized aboriginals, such as the Bāgdis and Bauris, whose religion is compounded of elements borrowed from orthodox Hinduism and survivals from the mingled Animism and Nature-worship of the pure aboriginals.

The Bāgdis worship Siva, Vishnu, Dharmarāj, Durgā, the Saktis, and the myriad names of the modern Hindu Pantheon, in a more or less intelligent fashion, under the guidance of degraded (*patit*) Brāhmans. But together with these greater gods we find the Santāl goddess Gosain Era and Barapahāri, which is merely another name for the "great mountain" (Marang Buru) of the Santāls; while the Bāgdis themselves say that their favourite deity is Manasā or the snake goddess. Similarly, the connection of the Bauris with Hinduism is of a slender kind. Their favourite objects of worship are Manasā, Bhādu, Mānsingh, Barapahāri, Dharmarāj, and Kudrāsinī. Goats are sacrificed to Mānsingh, and fowls to Barapahāri; pigs, fowls, rice, sugar and *ghī* are offered to Kudrāsinī on Saturdays and Sundays at the *ākhrā*, or dancing place of the village, through the medium of a Bauri priest, who abstains from flesh and fish on the day preceding the sacrifice. The priest gets as his fee the fowls that are offered and the leg of the pig; the worshippers eat the rest. Unlike the Bāgdis, who have degraded Brāhmans to look after their spiritual welfare, the Bauris have not yet attained to the dignity of having Brāhmans

to serve them, but their priests are men of their own caste, called Lāvā or Deghariā.

These two races account for one-fifth of the total population, and their favourite deities are Manasā and Bhādu, whose worship calls for a more detailed mention.

The worship of Manasā, the snake goddess, is conducted with great pomp and circumstance by both Bāgdis and Bauris, who claim that it secures them immunity from snake bite. On the 5th and 20th of Asārh, Srāban, Bhādra and Aswin, *i.e.*, the four rainy months lasting from the middle of June to the middle of October, rams and he-goats are sacrificed, and rice, sweetmeats, fruit and flowers are offered. On the Nāgpanchamī, *i.e.*, the 5th of the light half of Srāban (at the end of August), a four-armed effigy of the goddess, crowned by a tiara of snakes, grasping a cobra in each hand, and with her feet resting on a goose, is carried round the village with much discordant music, and is finally thrown into a tank.

Worship of Manasā.

The following account of the origin of this worship is given by Mr. R. C. Dutt :—"The semi-Hinduized aborigines may take to themselves the credit of having added some godheads to the Hindu Pantheon, and the goddess of Manasā is perhaps the most remarkable instance. Hindu gods are rather revered and venerated even by the advanced semi-aboriginals than actually worshipped; but Manasā is universally worshipped by the most backward as well as the advanced semi-aborigines of Western Bengal, and the worship is continued for days together, and is attended with much pomp and rejoicing, and singing in the streets. The fact of the introduction of this aboriginal worship among Hindus is crystallized in the story of Chānd Saudāgar, and is handed down from generation to generation. It is said that the Saudāgar refused to worship that goddess till his trade was ruined and his dearest child was killed by snake bite on his marriage day; then, and then only, was the merchant compelled to recognise the power of the snake goddess. It is significant, too, that the place which is pointed out as the site of this occurrence is near the Dāmodar river, which may be considered as the boundary line between the first Hindu settlers of Bengal and the aborigines. At what period the worship of Manasā crossed their boundary line and spread among the Hindus cannot be ascertained; but up to the present day the worship of this goddess among Hindus is tame, compared to the universal rejoicing and enthusiasm with which she is worshipped by her ancient followers, the present semi-Hinduized aborigines." *

* *The Aboriginal Element in the Population of Bengal*, Calcutta Review, 1882.

Worship of Bhādu.

Bhādu, according to one account, was the favourite daughter of a former Rājā of Pānchet, who died a virgin for the good of the people. In commemoration of her death, the Bāgdis and Bauris carry, in procession, an effigy representing her, on the last day of Bhādra, *i.e.*, in the middle of September. The worship consists of songs and wild dances in which men, women and children take part. A local correspondent gives a somewhat different account of the origin of the Bhādu *pūjā*, viz., that some 50 years ago the beautiful daughter of the Rājā of Kāsīpur (in Mānbhūm) died, and to commemorate her memory the Rājā instituted an annual festival, at which an image of his daughter was exhibited. This has been kept up, though its origin has been perhaps forgotten; and the Rājā's daughter has now been deified by the low castes, who, on the last night of Bhādra, hawk about a gorgeous image of her from house to house. Dancing goes on the whole night, and on the third day the image is thrown into a tank.

Regarding this worship, Mr. R. C. Dutt writes:—"The worship of Bhādu (in the month of Bhādra) is said to have been recently introduced into Bānkurā from Mānbhūm and other western districts. The worship is a purely aboriginal one, and the goddess Bhādu is not recognized by the Hindus, nor has she yet obtained any Hindu worshippers. She is imagined to be a princess of excessive goodness and beauty, who took pity on the condition of the poor Bauris, and died at an early age. The Bauris have no priests, and so the women and children of each family chant songs day after day before this idol, which they deck with flowers. For some days villages and streets resound with the singing of women and the merry shouts of boys. The last day of Bhādra is the last and most important day of this primitive *pūjā*, and the worshippers forget all work and all cares in their loud and boisterous worship of Bhādu. There can be no doubt the worship is connected in some way with the early rice harvest, which commences in Bhādra. This is the time of national rejoicings all over Bengal, and Hindus worship Durgā, Lakshmī, and a succession of deities as this harvest goes on." *

Worship of Dharmarāj.

It has already been mentioned that both Bāgdis and Bauris worship Dharmarāj, but this cult is not confined to them and is common throughout the district. There are many deities known by the name of Dharmarāj in various parts of Bānkurā, but the most ancient is said to be Briddhāksha, who is enshrined at Sānkāripārā in the town of Bishnupur. The name Briddhāksha means "the old-eyed one," and the god, who is also commonly

* *The Aboriginal Element in the Population of Bengal*, Calcutta Review, 1882.

known as Bura Dharma, is represented by a piece of stone covered with vermilion and having metal eyes. The priests are a family of Karmakārs or blacksmiths known as *Dharma pandits*, and the offerings consist of unboiled rice and sugar; such offerings are made even by Brāhmans. It is said that the worship of this deity goes back to the days before the establishment of the Bishnupur Rāj, *i.e.*, over 1,100 years, and that the ancient Rājās of Mallabhūm gave the idol endowments of lands, some of which are still held by the priests.

Other representations of Dharmarāj of some celebrity are the following. Bānkurā Rai of Indās is represented by a piece of stone with some carvings interpreted as the signs representing the ten incarnations of Vishnu. This idol is in the house of a Sūtradhar or carpenter, who acts as priest, and all the Hindu festivals are observed, the Rath Jātrā and Makar Sankrānti festivals being performed on a lavish scale; on the latter occasion cooked food, known as *khichuri bhog*, is prepared by Brāhmans and offered to the deity. The idol of Rūp Nārāyan of Mangalpur in thāna Indās is a piece of stone emblematical of the tortoise incarnation of Vishnu; this idol is in the house of a Tānti or weaver, who acts as priest. Swarūp Nārāyan of Gābpur in thāna Indās has a stone emblem also regarded as the tortoise incarnation of Vishnu; this is in the house of a Kotāl, who acts as priest. Nabajīban of Bālsī in the Indās thāna, a similar stone emblem, is enshrined in the house of a Kāmār or blacksmith, who acts as priest. The chief festival at which the three gods last named are worshipped is the Makar Sankrānti, at which *khichuri bhog* is offered. Rantak Rai of Pankhai near Bansī Chāndpur on the Dhalkisor is a stone emblem, also regarded as the tortoise incarnation of Vishnu, in the house of an Aguri, but the priest is a Brāhman. The chief festival in honour of this idol takes place on the occasion of Akshaya Tritiyā, on which day *khichuri bhog* is offered. Kālāchānd or Bansīdhar of Siās in thāna Kotalpur is another tortoise emblem in the house of a Nāpit or barber, who acts as priest; the Makar Sankrānti festival is celebrated with *khichuri bhog*. Bānkurā Rai of Baital in thāna Kotalpur, Panchānan of Parsā in the same thāna, Andharkulī of ...dhākulī in the Jaypur outpost and Kānkrā Bichhā of Gopālpur are also Dharma Thākurs of some celebrity. The origin of the names of the deities is unknown, but it has been suggested that they were originally the names of persons who inaugurated or popularized the worship of Dharma.

The worship of Dharma is believed by Mahāmahopādhāya Hara Prasād Sāstri to be a corrupt form of Buddhism. The

writers of Tāntrik compilations among the Hindus, he says, incorporated as many of the Tāntrik Buddhist divinities as they could possibly do without jeopardizing their reputation for orthodoxy. But there were still divinities, to whom, even with their wonderful power of adaptation, they could not venture to give a place in the Pantheon, and one of these is Dharma. Originally Dharma was the second person in the Buddhist Trinity, but the term came to be applied to the worship of stūpas, the visible emblem of Buddhism to the ignorant multitude. "Dharma worship remained confined to the lowest classes of the people—the dirtiest, meanest and most illiterate classes. All the lowest forms of worship rejected by the Brāhmans gradually rallied round Dharma, and his priests throughout Bengal enjoy a certain consideration which often excites the envy of their highly placed rivals, the Brāhmans, who, though hating them with a genuine hatred, yet covet their earnings wherever these are considerable; and there are instances in which the worship of Dharma has passed into Brāhman hands, and has been, by them, transformed into a manifestation either of Siva or of Vishnu." *

After recapitulating the arguments by which he identifies Dharma worship as a survival of Buddhism, the Pandit goes on to say—"The Dhārma worshippers are fully aware that Dharma is not an inferior deity; he is higher than Vishnu, higher than Siva, higher than Brahmā, and even higher than Pārvatī. His position is, indeed, as exalted as that of Brahmā in Hindu philosophy. In fact, one of the books in honour of Dharma gives an obscure hint that the work has been written with the object of establishing the Brahmahood of Dharma. The representation of Dharma in many places is a tortoise. Now a tortoise is a miniature representation of a stūpa with five niches for five Dhyāni Buddhas. At Saldā in Bānkurā an image of Buddha in meditative posture is still actually worshipped as Dharma. The worshippers of Dharma are unconscious of the fact that they are the survivors of a mighty race of men and that they have inherited their religion from a glorious past."* To this it may be added that at the present day the image of Dharma is generally found in the houses of low caste people, and that a popular saying is *Dharma nīchagāmī*, *i.e.*, Dharma, favours the low. At the same time, Dharma is offered cooked food even by a Brāhman.

Hook-swinging. Hook-swinging, once so familiar a part of the *Charak Pūjā* in some parts of Bengal, is still occasionally practised in Bānkurā by Santāls in the more remote tracts, in spite of the efforts made to suppress it. The following account of the ceremony, as witnessed

* Bengal Census Report of 1901, Part I, p. 204.

at Sārengā, is quoted from an article, "From the heart of Bengal—Hook-swinging and other diversions," published in the *Indian Methodist Times*, June 1900. "Our attention is drawn towards a mighty structure in course of erection. A long stout pole, 35 feet in height, has been erected. Balanced on the top of this is another pole, 30 feet long and so arranged that it can move both in a vertical as well as in a horizontal plane. On one side is a rude platform erected 30 feet high, so that by standing on the top of this one can just reach the end of the cross bar or lever. What is it all for? We plant our cameras down and wait. There are hurried consultations among the leading worshippers. At length a deputation approaches us. Will the *sāhibs* give them permission to swing? An explanation is given, and then we discover that this apparatus is for the famous "Hook-swinging," which has been illegal for more than 35 years; illegal, but yet we are informed that it is practised every year in these isolated districts. But what can we do? The people are excited, they say it is their custom, and they do not wish to be disappointed. We expostulate with them; we speak of the debasing and cruel nature of the custom; we keep our incriminating cameras pointed towards the apparatus, but it is all in vain. The people say they will swing and risk the consequences.

"A young man of nineteen declares his intention to swing. He pays his pice to the priest in charge, kneels at the foot of the pole, and then awaits the fixing of the hooks in his back. A man approaches with two hooks, about 3 inches in length, with a stout rope attached to the end of each. Standing behind the devotee, he catches hold of a lump of flesh on one side of his back, and in a skilful manner forces the hook through. At the same time, an attendant slaps the devotee on the mouth to hide any expression of pain from coming forth. Another hook is fixed in the same way, but on the other side of the back, and the victim is now ready for swinging. Strange to say, there is little or no blood, and the perfomer does not seem to be in much pain. Again he prays, and then mounts the platform or scaffold. He is received by several attendants, who fasten the ropes securely to the swinging-beam. When all is ready, and the beam is properly balanced by a number of men holding a rope from the other end, a signal is given, and away he goes 35 to 40 feet above the ground, suspended merely by the hooks in his flesh without any safeguard whatever, so that if the hooks were to break, or the flesh give way, he would be dashed to pieces on the hard ground below. Round and round he goes, while the people below gaze in rapture,

"At first, the swinging devotee stretches out his arms and clasps the beam, so as to take as much weight as possible off the hooks, but soon he gathers courage and, bringing his arms round in front of him, he unites his hands in the attitude of prayer. Then he grows bolder; with one hand he begins to scatter flowers, which he extracts from his *dhutī*, whilst with the other he plays on some instrument or produces a gurgling sound with his mouth by slapping it with his hand. All these various performances excite great approval from the admiring throng around. The swing ceases. He descends from the scaffold with the hooks still in his flesh. These are quickly extracted without a groan passing through his lips. Again he kneels at the foot of the pole, then the women throng around him with holy water, sweetmeats and all kinds of tempting tit-bits, as a reward for his devotion and as a mark of their approval.

"Not only young men, but middle-aged men and even boys go through the whole performance. There is no waiting. At least a hundred people, mostly Hindus, must have swung during the day. Some of these we question and find that many do it for the mere fun of the thing, others because they wish to return thanks for benefits received, and a few out of pure devotion to Siva. One old man has swung seven times, and the marks in his back, which he is proud to exhibit, bear testimony to the truth of his statement. One little boy fainted as he was being taken down. He said the pain was very great, and that he would not do it again, but later he said he had made a vow to swing every year."

Another curious ceremony which took place at the same place is thus described by the same writer. "Two poles are firmly fixed in the ground, six feet apart. A cross bar rests on the top of these. On this cross bar are two loops, eight feet from the ground. Below, a fire of charcoal is glowing, and by its side a priest is kneeling, and ever and anon he casts incense into the burning embers. A worshipper comes along; with a spring he catches hold of the cross bar and puts his feet into the loops and hangs down with his head just above the smoking incense. The priest mutters some mysterious *mantras*, and then the attendants begin to swing him backwards and forwards over the fire, while the devotee, placing his hands together, remains in the attitude of devout worship. The swinging ceases, he is assisted to the ground, and he goes away with added virtue to his credit. No sooner is he down, than another devotee is swinging. There is no waiting, and this goes on throughout the whole day."

CASTES AND TRIBES.

Ethnically, Bānkurā may be described as a border district lying between Chotā Nāgpur, the home of aboriginal races, and the

ngetic delta with its old Hindu population. Even within the trict itself there is a notable difference between the Bānkurā ›division to the west and the Bishnupur subdivision to the east. the former aboriginal races, such as Santāls, Bauris and Bāgdis, edominate, while in the latter pure Hindu castes, such as rāhmans, are found in greatest strength. Taking the district as whole, castes and tribes of aboriginals or semi-aboriginals are most numerous, the Santāls, Bauris and Bāgdis alone accounting for over one-fourth of the total population.

The marginal table shows the strength of the different castes and tribes numbering over 50,000. As regards these castes, no special description is needed of the Brāhmans, Goālās and Telis, who resemble their fellow castemen in other parts of Bengal in their manner of living and caste structure. The Telis, however, it may be mentioned, are now no longer oil-pressers but cultivators; the actual oil-pressers are Kalus, but they prefer to call themselves Telis. A fuller description is required of the Bauris, Santāls and Bāgdis, which may be regarded as the characteristic tribes of Bānkurā.

Bauri ...	... 113,325
Santāl ...	... 105,682
Brāhman ...	... 93,443
Bāgdi ...	... 90,868
Teli ...	... 73,596
Goālā ...	... 65,784

Bauris. The Bauris are a low aboriginal caste who work as cultivators, agricultural labourers and *pālki*-bearers. They are divided into the following nine sub-castes:—(1) Mallabhumiā, (2) Sikhariā or Gobariā, (3) Panchakoti, (4) Molā or Mulo, (5) Dhuliā or Dhulo, (6) Maluā or Māluā, (7) Jhātiā or Jhetiā, (8) Kāthuriā, and (9) Pāthuriā. Some of these sub-castes appear to have been originally territorial subdivisions. The Mallabhumiā and Maluā, and perhaps also the Molā, were residents of Mallabhūm, *i.e.*, the eastern and central portions of the district; the Sikhariās were originally Bauris who lived in Sikharbhūm, *i.e.*, the tract between the Kāsai and Barākar rivers; the Dhuliā sub-caste is supposed to come from Dhalbhūm, which in this district includes the Khātrā thāna; while Panchakoti refers to the central portion of the Pānchet (Pachet) estate to the west. The name Gobariā is said to refer to a domestic custom of clearing up the remnants of a meal with cowdung, and Jhātiā is explained as denoting a group who simply sweep away the fragments of a meal without washing the place where it has been spread.

Many of them held substantial tenures on terms of police service—a fact which lends colour to the view that they are among the earliest settlers in this part of the country. Traces of totemism still survive in their reverence for the red-backed heron and the dog, and perhaps in their strong objection to

touching horse-dung. The heron is looked upon as the emblem of the tribe, and may not be killed or molested on pain of expulsion from the caste. Dogs also are sacred, so much so that a Bauri will on no account kill a dog or touch a dead dog's body, and the water of a tank in which a dog has been drowned cannot be used until an entire rainy season has washed the impurity away.

Bauris admit into their caste members of any caste higher than themselves in social standing. No regular ceremony* is appointed for such occasions: the new member merely pays to the caste *panchāyat* a sum of money, varying from Rs. 10 to 15, to be spent on a feast, at which, for the first time, he openly eats with his adopted caste brethren. The origin of this singular practice is perhaps to be sought in the lax views of the Bauris on the subject of sexual morality. In other castes a woman who has an intrigue with an outsider is punished by expulsion from the caste; but Bauris not only allow their women to live openly with men of other castes, but receive those men in their own community when, as frequently happens, they are outcasted by their own people for eating rice cooked by their mistresses. Divorce is easily obtained. It is effected by the husband taking away from his wife the iron ring which every married woman wears and proclaiming to the *panchāyat* the fact of his having divorced her. Divorced wives may always marry again.

The Bauris are addicted to strong drink, and with few exceptions, are indifferent to the nice scruples regarding food which have so important a bearing on the status of the average Hindus; for they eat beef, pork, fowls, all kinds of fish, and rats. Nevertheless they pride themselves on not eating snakes and lizards; and it may be that this is connected in some way with the worship of the snake-goddess Manasā, who is supposed to preserve her worshippers from snake-bite. In most districts the Bauris now burn their dead, as Hindus do, but in Bānkurā they bury the corpse with the head to the north and the face downward, believing that it prevents the spirit from getting out to give trouble to the relations and fellow castemen of the deceased.*

ntāls. The Santāls are almost entirely confined to the Bānkurā subdivision. Only 6,236 are found in the Bishnupur subdivision, and most of these are residents of the western portion of that subdivision, not more than 1,266 being found in the eastern and northern thānas of Kotalpur, Indās and Sonāmukhī. They are rarely known to immigrate from the former to the latter subdivision, where, according to their notion, there exists no field for them. Born and bred in the jungle, their favourite occupation,

* Risley's Tribes and Castes of Bengal.

besides hunting, is the gradual reclamation of jungle land. To this work they assiduously adhere till, as is often the case, they are ousted from the land thus won from the waste by grasping landlords, who, when they find that the land broken up by the Santāls has attained the desired point of tillage, demand an exorbitant rent, or employ other means to compel them to give up their holdings and betake themselves to fresh jungle, where they are subsequently no better treated. Of late years, however, they have become more tenacious of their rights. A fuller description of this interesting race will be found in the Appendix to this Chapter.

Bāgdis.

The Bāgdis are another caste of non-Aryan origin, who account for their genesis by a number of legends. One of these is to the effect that they originally came from Cooch Behār and were the offspring of Siva and Pārvatī. Siva, it is said, lived there with a number of concubines of the Koch tribe. Pārvatī was moved by jealousy to come in the disguise of a fisherwoman and destroy the standing crops of the Koches, and Siva could only induce her to depart by begetting on her a son and a daughter. These twins were afterwards married, and gave birth to Hāmbīr, king of Bishnupur in this district, from whose four daughters—Sāntu, Netu, Mantu and Kshetu—the four sub-castes Tentuliā, Duliā, Kusmetia and Mātiā are descended. It is an instructive coincidence that the founder of the Bishnupur Rāj, Adi Malla, from whom Bīr Hāmbīr was descended, is to this day known as the Bāgdi Rājā, and his descendants as the kings of the Bāgdis.

In this district the original structure of the caste seems to have been singularly well preserved, and we find the Bāgdis divided into the following sub-castes:—(1) Tentuliā, bearing the titles Bāgh, Sāntrā, Rai, Khān, Puilā; (2) Kāsāikuliā, with the titles Mānjhi, Masālchi, Palankhāi, Pherkā; (3) Duliā, with the titles Sardār and Dhārā; (4) Ujhā or Ojhā; (5) Māchhuā, Mechhuā or Mecho; (6) Gulimānjhi; (7) Dandamānjhi; (8) Kusmetia, Kusmātiā or Kusputra; (9) Mallametiā, Mātiā or Mātiāl. Of these endogamous sub-castes the Tentuliā is called after the tamarind tree (*tentul*), and the Kāsaikuliā is named from the Kāsai river. These two groups work as masons, and also prepare the lime which is mixed with the betel leaves and areca nut chewed by all classes of natives of India. The Duliā Bāgdis carry palanquins or *dulis*, and, in common with the other sub-castes, earn their livelihood by fishing, making gunny bags, weaving cotton, and preparing the red powder (*ābīr*) used in the Holī festival. The Bāgdi fisherman uses the ordinary circular cast-net, but swings the net round his head before casting it, a practice which is

supposed by the regular fishing castes of Bengal—Tiyar, Māl and Kaibartta—to be peculiarly dishonourable. Of the other sub-castes the Māchhuā derive their name from fishing, the Mātiāl from earth-working, the Kusmetia are called after the *kusa* grass; the Ojhā are, or are supposed to have been, the priests of the tribe. Within these sub-castes again are a number of exogamous sections, among which may be mentioned Kāsbak, the heron; Ponkrishi, the jungle cock; Sālrishi or Sālmāchh, the *sāl* fish; Pātrishi, the bean; and Kachchhap, the tortoise. The totem is taboo to the members of the section, *e.g.*, a Kāsbak Bāgdi may not kill or eat a heron, and a Pātrishi may not touch a bean. A Bāgdi cannot marry outside the sub-caste nor inside the section to which he belongs. Thus, a Tentuliā must marry a Tentuliā, but a man of the Sālrishi section, to whatever sub-caste he may belong, cannot marry a woman of that section.

Bāgdis practise both infant and adult marriage indifferently. In the case of girls who are not married in infancy, sexual license before marriage is virtually tolerated, it being understood that if a girl becomes pregnant, she will find some one to marry her. Among a mass of ritual borrowed from the Brahmanical system, the marriage ceremony (*bibāha* or *biāh*) has preserved some interesting usages, which appear to belong to a different, and perhaps more primitive, order of symbolism. Early on the wedding morning, before the bridegroom starts in procession for the bride's house, he goes through a mock marriage to a *mahuā* tree (*Bassia latifolia*). He embraces the tree and bedaubs it with vermilion; his right wrist is bound to it with thread; and after he is released from the tree, this same thread is used to attach a bunch of *mahuā* leaves to his wrist. The *barāt* or procession of the bridegroom's party is usually timed so as to reach the bride's house about sunset. On arrival, the inner courtyard of the house is defended by the bride's friends, and a mimic conflict takes place, which ends in the victory of the *barāt*.

Symbolic capture having been thus effected, the bridegroom is seated with his face to the east on a wooden stool placed under a bower of *sāl* leaves, having pots of oil, grain and turmeric at the four corners, and a small pool of water in the centre. When the bride enters, she marches seven times round the bower, keeping it always on her right hand, and seats herself opposite to the bridegroom, the pool of water being between the pair. The right hands of the bride, the bridegroom, and the bride's eldest relative are tied together with thread by the officiating Brāhman, who at the same time recites sacred texts (*mantras*), the purport of which is that the bride has been given by her people to the bridegroom

and has been accepted by him. The priest then claims his fee, and, after receiving it, unties the thread and knots together the scarves worn by the married couple. This part of the ceremony is called *gotrāntar*, the change of *gotra*, and is supposed to transfer the bride from her own section or exogamous group to that of her husband. It is followed by *sindurdān, i.e.*, the bridegroom takes a small cup of vermilion (*sindur*) in his left hand, and with his right hand smears the colour on the parting of the bride's hair. This is considered the essential and binding portion of the marriage ceremony. Garlands of flowers are then exchanged by the parties, and the rest of the night is spent in feasting, the married couple leaving for the bridegroom's house early next morning. The knotted scarves are not untied until the fourth day after the wedding. When a divorce takes place, it is symbolized by the husband breaking a straw in two or taking away the iron bracelet commonly worn by married women.

Like the Bauris, the Bāgdis admit members of any higher caste into their circle, and the process of initiation is like that already described in the case of the Bauris, except that a man admitted into the Duliā sub-caste has to take the palanquin or *duli* on his shoulder as a sign of his acceptance of their hereditary occupation. Most of the Bāgdis are to some extent engaged in agriculture, usually as *korfā* or under-ryots, and comparatively few have attained the more respectable position of occupancy tenants. Large numbers work as landless day labourers, paid in cash or kind, or as nomadic cultivators, tilling other men's lands on the *bhāg-jot* system, under which they are remunerated by a specified share of the produce. Their social rank is very low, and they are usually classed with Bauris and Bhuiyās as dwellers on the outskirts of Hinduism. Some Bāgdis eat beef and pork, and most indulge freely in flesh of other kinds, and are greatly addicted to drink. Tentuliā Bāgdis, however, will not eat beef, and many members of this sub-caste have become Vaishnavas and abstain from all sorts of flesh.*

SOCIAL LIFE.

Land-lords and tenants.

The whole district was originally the territory of the Bishnupur Rājās, by whom portions were allotted to subordinate chiefs for the protection of the frontier. These chiefs, who, like the Rājās, were recognized as Kshattriyas, held sway over aboriginal tribes and were useful auxiliaries to their overlords in resisting the Marāthās and other hordes of invaders. Their descendants are still locally known as Rājās by their tenants, although the title is not recognized by Government. On the dissolution of the Bishnupur Rāj, the property in the immediate possession of

* Risley's Tribes and Castes of Bengal.

the Rāj passed into the hands of the Burdwān Rāj, but the large fiefs continued as before in the possession of the Kshattriyas or their representatives in interest. The holders of these fiefs made grants to their relatives and kinsmen, but the latter have now, to a very large extent, transferred their holdings to money lenders and others, and are consequently in an impoverished state. The zamīndārs in their turn did not fare better, for their poverty compelled them to mortgage their estates and in some cases to sell some portions to liquidate their debts. Owing to these and other causes the greater part of Bānkurā is now under large non-resident proprietors, such as the Mahārāj-Adhirāj Bahādur of Burdwān, Kumār Rāmeswar Māliā, and the Rājā of Pānchet.

Another important class consists of *patnīdārs*, who owe their existence to the system of permanent subinfeudation introduced by the Mahārājā of Burdwān after the Permanent Settlement. He parcelled out his vast estate into tenures known as *patnī tāluks*, the grantees of which not only gave him a high premium but covenanted to pay an annual rental in perpetuity. This system, which left him a mere annuity on the land, was recognized by law in 1819, and a power of sale similar to that possessed by Government was given to the *patnīdārs*. The latter again sublet on similar terms, and the result has been to create a class of persons living on small fixed incomes and without interest in the tenantry. This has caused a disappearance of the old feudal spirit and a disintegration of the relations between landlords and tenants, who no longer have that common solidarity of interest which used to exist. The surplus grain in former days was spent in works of public utility, and a large village would have good tanks and bathing *ghāts*, while its temples were carefully kept up and religious festivals were lavishly observed. Now, in many cases, the old zamīndār's family residence is in ruins, and he himself often spends what income he can realise in fighting law suits. If the landlord is not in debt, he is usually an absentee, having but lately purchased the estate; but it is reported that the large non resident landlords all treat their tenants with justice and consideration. It must be remembered, moreover, that this state of affairs only marks a transition stage, the old feudal inter-dependence between zamīndārs and their tenants not yet having been replaced by the new inter-dependence between labour and capital.

Village officials. The following is a brief account of the principal village officials or of those whose duties bring them into close connection with the villagers.

The *naib* is the deputy or representative of the landholder, placed in charge of the whole or part of his zamīndāri or estate, of which he has the general management. He is assisted by a staff of *muharrirs*, peons and *gumāshtas*. **Naib.**

Perhaps the most important personality in village life is the *gumāshta* or *tahsīldār*, as he is the agent employed by the zamīndār to manage affairs between himself and his tenants. His chief duties consist in collecting rents, granting receipts, and seeing that the *nij-jot* or home farm lands of his master are properly cultivated, and that in case any cultivator abandons his fields and leaves the village, the relinquished lands are let out to a new tenant. Through him the zamīndār carries on a trade with his ryots by advancing rice and seed at interest to those in need of accommodation; and he keeps the accounts of the rent collections and grain advances. At each village he has a *khāmār*, or house for storing grain, in which he keeps paddy received from the cultivators, either in payment of the grain advanced to them or of rent paid in kind (*sājā jamā* or *bhāg jamā*). His salary is generally paid in money, and in addition to this, he receives perquisites from the cultivators on the occasion of certain festivals. Where the estate is a large one, one *gumāshta* is appointed to collect the rents of a group of several villages; but in such cases he often has an assistant called an *ātpaharī* or *paik*, who is remunerated by a grant of rent-free land. **Gumāshta.**

Besides his other multifarious duties, the *gumāshta* is often called upon to assist his employer in the conduct of suits connected with the villages in his charge, and occasionally to give evidence as a witness. But, by the custom of the country, a man who is considered respectable in the village community avoids giving testimony in a court as much as possible. He is therefore generally allowed an assistant, called the *faujdāri gumāshta*, whose duty it is to look after any case in which the zamīndār's interests are involved.

The *mukhya* or *mandal* is a village official, who formerly held an important position, as he was the representative of the villagers in matters of general or individual interest, an arbiter in petty disputes, and a respectable man whose presence would be sought by the villagers at feasts and festivals. *Mukhya* is a Sanskrit word meaning superior, but at the present day it is a misnomer, as his social position is not always high and the respect shown to him is often a mere shadow of what it formerly was. He is still the village headman, however, and his post is hereditary. He receives perquisites and gifts from the villagers on the occasion of domestic and religious ceremonies, ***Mukhya* or *mandal*.**

in accordance with time-honoured custom. When a marriage takes place, he is paid a small sum of money, according to the means of the payer, and also receives a few betel-nuts, sweetmeats, and other presents, which, although of small value, are indicative of respect for his position. Again, whenever a villager gives a feast on the occasion of *annaprāsan* (or the feeding of an infant with rice for the first time), *karnabedh* (ear-boring), *upanayana* (first wearing of the sacred thread by Brāhman boys), marriage, *srāddha* (funeral obsequies), *sapindakaran* (annual obsequies), or *pūjā* (religious ceremonies), the *mukhya*, of whatever caste he may be, must be invited to dine.

The other village officials are the priest, barber, washerman, astrologer, and the representatives of the various artisan castes. In the old Hindu organization, these persons were looked upon as public servants, and remunerated by grants of rent-free lands from the common lands of the village. They have, however, long ceased to exist as village officials, and are now hardly more than private servants carrying on certain occupations, and paid for their work by the individuals on whom they attend.

Purohit.

The chief of these is the *purohit* or priest. Nearly every well-to-do Hindu cultivator maintains a family idol, generally a *sālgrām* (a black round stone with a hole in it), which the family priest worships every morning and evening as representing Vishnu. For this he is remunerated by daily gifts of rice and milk. In some villages there is an idol kept in a house called the *mandap*, or in a masonry temple erected at the joint expense of the great majority of the villagers; and gifts of rice, fruit, etc., for its service are contributed by each household in turn. If the village idol has been set up by a zamīndār or rich villager, there will generally be found an endowment of land attached thereto, from the proceeds of which the articles necessary for the *pūjā* service are purchased, and from which are supported the village priest, the *māli* who furnishes the flowers, the *doms* or musicians, the *kāmār* who sacrifices goats before the idol, the potter who supplies the earthen vessels, etc. Besides his remuneration for his services before the idol, the family priest receives numerous gifts from the villagers on occasions of births, marriages, *srāddha*, etc.

An account of the other village servants will be found in Chapter VII.

Sardār.

Formerly the responsibility of keeping the roads open and of protecting travellers from robbery rested with a quasi-military class of men, called *ghātwāls*, to whom grants of lands were allotted in return for their services. The man at the head of

this quasi-military class of men was called *sardār;* the man next in rank and immediately subordinate to him was the *sadiāl*, and the *tābedārs* or *ghātwāls* were immediately subordinate to the latter. The duty of the *sardār* was to collect *panchak* or quit-rent from the *sadiāls* and *tābedār ghātwāls*, to pay the same to Government or to the zamīndār, as the case might be, to depute *ghātwāls* for keeping watch and ward in villages or on roads, to assist police officers in their investigations, and to perform other police duties when necessary. The lands granted to these men have been or are being resumed, but the old titles still remain. A more detailed account of them will be found in Chapter XI.

Sadiāls.

The *sadiāls* used to collect *panchak* from their *tābedārs* and to pay the same to the *sardār* and to supervise the work of the *ghātwāls*. In some instances also they were deputed for watch and ward duties in the villages and along the roads.

Tābedār ghātwāls.

The duties of a *tābedār ghātwāl* were to keep watch over a *ghāt*, a term which means generally a village or group of two or more villages and portions of roads. He was also required to give information of any offence cognizable by the police committed within his *ghāt*, and to report births and deaths, for which purpose he had to attend the police station periodically.

Digārs.

In *parganas* Mahiswarā, Supur, Ambikānagar, Raipur, Phul-kusmā, Syāmsundarpur, Simlāpāl, and Bhālāidihā, those who performed the duties of *sardār* were called *digārs*. The *digārs* of the last seven *parganas* exercised the powers of head-constables when those *parganas* were in Mānbhūm.

Jāgīrdārs.

In *parganas* Mahiswarā and Chhātnā there are a class of men called *jāgīrdārs*, who performed the duties of *sardārs* in the former and the duties of *ghātwāls* in the latter *pargana*.

Simānādārs.

In thānas Indās and Kotalpur, there are a body of men called *simānādārs*, who perform the duties of *chaukīdārs*. They have grants of lands in lieu of wages; but in some instances these service lands have been resumed under Act VI of 1870.

Itmāmdārs or mandals.

Itmāmdārs or *mandals* are persons charged with the realization of a stipulated rent for a certain *mauzā* or number of *mauzās*, and in lieu of wages enjoy certain lands rent-free in the *mauzā* or *mauzās* in their charge. Such lands are called *itmāmdāri* or *mandali* lands.

Parāmānik and mānjhi.

The *parāmānik* is the headman among certain lower castes, who decides questions affecting the caste and other social matters. Among Santāls the headman is called a *mānjhi*. He presides at village meetings, decides petty disputes, arranges hunting parties, and attends marriages and religious ceremonies.

Faujdār and *chhari-dār.*

It is reported that the district, or rather this part of the country, is divided into several divisions by the Goswāmis of Khardah in the 24-Parganas, who are the descendants of Nityānanda and are regarded as leaders of the Vaishnavas by the followers of Chaitanya and Nityānanda. In each division, which is called *bhābuk mahāl*, the Goswāmis keep two officers, viz., a *faujdār* and under him a *chharidār*. For every *bhek*, *i.e.*, the ceremony of initiation of a Vaishnava, and for every marriage and death ceremony of Vaishnavas, Re. 1-6 is said to be due to the Goswāmis, of which the *faujdār* gets 4 annas and the *chharidār* 2 annas as remuneration for the services they render to the Goswāmis.

Food.

The ordinary food of all classes consists principally of rice, pulses (*dāl*), fish, milk and vegetables. The food and the time for taking it vary according to circumstances, but the general practice is to take two meals, one in the day at about 10 or 11 A.M., and the other at night at about 8 or 9 P.M. The meals consist of the articles mentioned above, except that some take bread or *luchi*, *i.e.*, bread fried in *ghī*, at night. As a rule, also, a light repast, usually consisting of sweetmeats, is taken in the morning and in the evening.

Dwellings.

The houses fall under three main heads, viz., *pākā* or houses made of brick or masonry, *kānchā* or houses thatched with straw, and *khaprā* or houses with tiled roofs. The *pākā* houses again are generally of three kinds, viz., those roofed with beams and rafters made of wood, those in which the roof is supported by girders, and those in which it rests on arches; there are, however, very few of the latter two classes. The walls of these houses are either constructed of bricks made with *surki* and lime or of bricks made of mud. The thatched houses may be divided into three classes according to their thatching, viz., *ekchālā*, *duchālā* and *chauchālā*, *i.e.*, houses with one, two, or four thatches. Some of the walls are made of clay, some of unburnt bricks, some of branches of trees and bushes smeared over with clay, and others of wood and clay. Houses of the latter two kinds are called *jhātībār* or *gurābār*, and the last kind is seen in places subject to inundation. Houses thatched with straw are common all over the district; in towns and populous villages masonry buildings are met with in fairly large numbers; while a few tiled houses are found in the town of Bānkurā and in the western parts of *parganas* Chhātnā and Ambikānagar.

The houses are mainly of the Lower Bengal style of architecture with the ridge and eave lines curved and the thatch very thick. The reason for this style of architecture seems to be that

in this part of the country the rainfall is so heavy that, unless very thick thatch is put on, water leaks through, especially along the corner beams of a *chauchālā* or four-thatched house. "It must be clear that, when an oblong or a square room is covered by four thatches meeting either in a ridge or in a point, and the thatches have all the same inclination, the slope of the roof at the lines of junction of the four thatches is much gentler than elsewhere, and, as a consequence, leaks are more frequent at these than elsewhere. To give to these lines the same or nearly the same inclination as the other portions of the roof, the corners have to be lowered. Hence the curved outline of the ridge and eave lines."*

Clothing.

The ordinary clothing of a gentleman appearing at a social gathering in the cold weather consists of a *dhuti*, or waistcloth of cotton, a shirt and coat, a shawl and a pair of stockings and shoes. In other seasons of the year a *dhuti*, shirt or coat, a *chādar* and shoes are worn. When appearing at office, the clothing consists of pantaloons, a shirt, a *chapkān*, a *chādar*, and a pair of stockings and shoes; persons of somewhat higher position use *chogās*, or loose overcoats, instead of *chādars*. The ordinary clothing of a man of the middle classes consists of a *dhuti*, *chādar* and a pair of shoes or slippers; shirts and coats are also occasionally used. A cultivator wears merely a coarse *dhuti* and a scarf (*gāmchā*) thrown over the shoulders or wrapped around the waist. Men of the lower classes have a coarse *dhuti* only. In the cold weather shawls and various wrappers are used, such as the *banāts* made of serge or broadcloth, the *dhusā* and *bālāposh* made of cotton and cloth, the *garbhasuti* woven with tusser and cotton thread, and the *gilāp* or *pāchhuri*, which is a double *chādar* made of coarse cloth. The dress of the women generally consists of a *sārī* only; but in rich families the use of bodices and wrappers in the winter has been introduced. As a rule, females, with the exception of prostitutes, do not use shoes, shawls, or other garments used by the males.

Amusements.

The amusements of the people consist chiefly of the *jātrā*, a theatrical entertainment given in the open air, *baithaki* songs, *i.e.*, songs in the *baithak* or general sitting room, and dancing. In all of these both vocal and instrumental musics are employed. Men of all classes attend *jātrās*, but the mass of the people amuse themselves with *Harisankīrtan*, in which they sing and dance in the name of Hari (God). Sometimes *Harisankīrtan* continues without intermission for several days and nights, and is called,

* Reports, Arch. Surv. India, Vol. VIII, pp. 179-180.

according to its duration, *ahorātra* (one day and night), *chabbis-prahar* (3 days and nights), *pancharātra* (5 days and nights) and *nabarātra* (9 days and nights). The people of the *Rārh desh*, of which Bānkurā forms part, are, it may be added, famous *jātra* performers, and the inhabitants of Bishnupur are particularly musical.

General conditions.

The population is a mixed one, including pure Hindu castes of Aryan descent, semi-aboriginals recently admitted in the pale of Hinduism, and pure aboriginal tribes. The following account of the general conditions prevailing is quoted from an article by Mr. R. C. Dutt, "The Aboriginal Element in the Population of Bengal" (Calcutta Review, 1882), which is especially applicable to this district. "Living in the same district, and often in the same village, the Hindu and the semi-Hinduized aboriginal nevertheless present differences in their habits and ways of living which cannot but strike even the most careless observer. Belief in a highly developed religion and an elaborate superstition has made the Hindu even of the lower castes timid and contemplative; a higher civilization has made him calculating, thoughtful and frugal, and a long training in the arts of peace has made him regular in his habits, industrious in his toil, peaceful in his disposition. The semi-aboriginal, on the other hand, presents us with a striking contrast in character in all these respects. He is of an excitable disposition and seeks for strong excitement and pleasures; he is incapable of forethought, and consumes his earnings without a thought for the future; he is incapable of sustained toil, and, therefore, oftener works as a field-labourer than as a cultivator. Simple, merry in his disposition, excitable by nature, without forethought or frugality, and given to drunkenness, the semi-aboriginal of Bengal brings to his civilized home many of the virtues and vices of the savage aboriginal life which his forefathers lived. In every village where semi-aboriginals live, a separate portion of the village is reserved for them, and the most careless observer will be struck with the difference between neatness and tidiness, the well swept, well washed, and well-thatched huts of the Hindu neighbourhood, and the miserable, dirty, ill-thatched huts of the Bauri *Pārā* or the Hāri *Pārā*. If a cow or a pig dies in the village, it is flayed, and the meat carried home by the Muchis or Bauris, while the Hindus turn aside their face and stop their nose in disgust when passing near such scenes. If there is an outstill in the village, it is in the Bāgdi *Pārā* or in the Bauri *Pārā*; it is thronged by people of these castes, who spend their miserable earnings here, regardless of their ill-thatched huts and their ill-fed children.

"The mass of the Hindu population are dead against drink and drunkenness; their thrift and habitual forethought, their naturally sober and contemplative turn of mind, as well as their religious feelings, keep them quite safe from contracting intemperate habits. A few educated young men and a larger number of the upper classes may get addicted to drink, but the mass of the working classes, the frugal and calculating shopkeeper, the patient and hardworking Sadgop or Goālā, the humble and laborious Kaibartta, all keep away from drink. The boisterous merriment that is caused by drunkenness is foreign to their quiet, sober nature, and if a very few of them drink, they drink quietly at home before they retire at night. Far different is the case with the semi-Hinduized aborigines. Barbarians hanker after strong excitements and boisterous joys, and nowhere is drunkenness so universal as among barbarians. The Bauris, the Bāgdis, the Muchis have enough of their old nature in them to feel a craving for drink, and the outstill system with the cheapening of spirits has been a boon to them. When spirit was dear, they made themselves merry over their *pachwāi;* and now that spirit is cheaper, they take to it naturally in preference to *pachwāi.* Of the numerous outstills and *pachwāi* shops in Burdwān and Bānkurā that we have visited, we have not seen one which did not mainly depend for its revenue on semi-aboriginal consumers. We never saw one single Hindu among the crowds of people assembled in liquor or *pachwāi* shops; when the Hindu does drink, he sends for the drink, and consumes it at home.

"The distinction between Hindus and the semi-Hinduized aborigines is no less marked in the position of their women. Nowhere, except in towns, are Hindu women kept in that absolute seclusion which Musalmān women delight in. In villages the wives and daughters of the most respectable and high caste Hindus walk with perfect freedom from house to house, or to the tank or river-side for their ablutions. Respectable women go veiled, while those of the lower classes go without veil or only half veiled. No respectable woman will speak to, or can be accosted by a stranger, while even among the lower class Hindu women, except when verging on old age, few will often speak to strangers. These restrictions entirely disappear in the case of the semi-Hinduized aborigines. Their women have the perfect freedom of women in Europe. Young wives, as well as elderly widows, walk without the apology of a veil through the streets or the village bazar; they will talk to any one when necessary; and being naturally of merry, lively dispositions, they chat and laugh gaily as they pass

through the most crowded streets. The young Tānti or Chhutā women, the Kumhār or the Kāmār's wife, will often stand asid[e] when a stranger is passing by the same road, but custom impose[s] no such rule of modesty on the women of the Bauris. But, if th[e] semi-aboriginal women enjoy the perfect freedom of Europea[n] women, they have often to pay dearer for their liberty. Household work is the lot of Hindu women, but the semi-aboriginal women must do outdoor work also. Wives as well as widows, mothers and daughters, are all expected to work in the field or at the village, tank or road, and so eke out the miserable incomes of their husbands, sons or fathers. When a road is constructed by Government or a tank excavated by a village zamīndār, Bauri men and women work together, the men using the spades and the women carrying the earth in baskets. Wives often carry things for sale to the village market, while husbands work in the field; the Bauri women of Bānkurā are the best coolies for carrying luggage or portmanteaus, often twenty or thirty miles in a day.

"There is a curious distinction made in field labour among the semi-aboriginal tribes. Ploughing and sowing are the duties of men, transplantation and weeding are the duties of women. When the seedlings are grown in the nursery, and the fields are well ploughed and prepared for receiving the seedlings, the work of the men has ceased for a time. To take the seedlings to the field and to plant them there in sand or knee-deep water, is the work of the women. They are said to be more proficient in their light but tiresome work than men, and some women are so proficient, that they will not work for others at daily rates of wages, but will earn much more by taking contracts for definite areas, which they will plant with seedlings in a wonderfully short time. In the fertile valley of the Kāsai, in the district of Bānkurā, we have seen rice-fields stretching one after the other for miles together, and all under transplantation. Bauri and other semi-aboriginal women are seen by the hundred engaged in this work, standing in the midday sun, in wind or water, planting the seedlings with surprising nimbleness, or resting for a while, and gaily chatting with each other with that lightness and joyousness of heart which never deserts them. When the corn is ripe, the tougher work of reaping belongs to man, though we have sometimes seen women take a part in it also. For the rest, the lot of these semi-aboriginal women is not a hard one, to judge from their healthy appearance and their merry faces, but when the husbands get drunk, as they do as often as they can, the wives, we fancy, have a bad time of it, and wife-beating

is very much worse among the semi-aboriginal castes than among Hindus.

"In their social and religious ceremonies the semi-Hinduized aborigines are every day being drawn closer to Hinduism. The more respectable and advanced among them may indeed be said to have adopted Hinduism in all its main features, while even the most backward castes have adopted some Hindu customs."

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER III.

THE SANTALS OF BANKURA.

THE Santāls in this district number 105,682—a total exceeded only in three other districts, viz., Mānbhūm, Midnapore, and the Santāl Parganas. Though far away from the main body of the race, they have preserved many of its distinctive customs, and the old tribal life has to a certain extent remained intact. They suffer, however, from the disadvantage of living outside the Santāl Parganas, in which special laws have been introduced to protect the simple cultivators from Hindu *mahājans* and to secure them in possession of their lands. For want of such protection, most of the villages in the south and south-west of the district, which until perhaps 20 or 30 years ago almost invariably belonged to Santāls, have passed into the possession of Hindu money-lenders; and it is doubtful if the *mahājan* has not obtained a footing in the few villages that are still purely Santāl. It is true that Santāls still cultivate the village lands, but instead of paying a nominal rent, they now have to make over half the produce of their fields to their landlord, and instead of having a permanent right in the land, they are merely annual tenants.

In spite of this, the character of the Bānkurā Santāl has not yet been altogether spoiled. He may be described as naturally a brave but shy child of the jungle—simple, truthful, honest and industrious—before he is brought into contact with alien influences and taught to cheat, lie and steal. Even now, it is a somewhat instructive fact that, whereas in a Hindu village agricultural implements have to be carefully housed every night, if they are to be available for the next day's labour, the Santāl villager leaves his goods and chattels lying about anywhere, confident that the trust he reposes in his neighbours will not be abused. In Hindu villages again the cultivators find it necessary to erect shelters, and to watch their ripening crops throughout the night, in order to prevent the theft of ears of grain. But the Santāl in a purely Santāl village never dreams of watching for anything

For this account of the Bānkurā Santāls I am indebted to a note kindly communicated by the Revd. G. Woodford of the Wesleyan Mission at Sārengā.

but a bear or a wild pig, both of which are apt to play havoc with the little patch of sugarcane that secures the few simple luxuries of the household.

As a cultivator the Santāl may not be able to compete with the Bengali in raising the better kinds of rice, but on high rough jungle lands he is much more expert. He has a peculiar skill in converting jungle and waste land into rice fields, and is as much an enemy of jungle as he is of wild beasts. Nor is the latter characteristic unnatural, for apart from the damage caused by bear and wild pig, leopards often cause him heavy loss, constantly carrying off pigs, goats and calves, and not infrequently attacking cows and bullocks as they graze in the jungle. In spite of such drawbacks, many Santāls, although possessing very little good rice land, manage in good years to live fairly comfortably on their crops of maize, *kodo*, *til*, linseed and mustard, produced on land that the Bengali cultivator would never attempt to cultivate. Many of the men too are expert weavers, making their own primitive looms. A little patch of cotton surrounds almost every house, and when the women of the family have picked, cleaned and spun it into thread, the head of the household will sit down to weave the cloth for the family for the coming year. And good strong material he produces—not so showy as the imported cloth worn by Bengali women and girls, but often lasting twice as long. The men, as a rule, are content with a small loin cloth, but the women are invariably clad decently in a *sārī* some 15 feet long. This they do not wear over the head like their Bengali sisters, but in graceful folds over their shoulders. The women are exceedingly fond of flowers, and whenever possible, wear one stuck in their hair, which is arranged in a knot at the back of the head.

Practically all the simple necessaries of the Santāl's life are produced on his own land. He grows his own tobacco; he makes his own oil, which is used for anointing the body as well as for cooking; and most of the spices required for his curry and all his vegetables are home-grown. His intoxicants—and he unfortunately gets through a good deal in the course of the year—he can purchase cheaply at the Government shop; but the *rati* liquor is not to his taste and the force of habit is strong, so that very frequently the old rice liquor (*hānriā*), prepared in the old way, is still his most usual means of banishing dull care. Practically, the only thing that a fairly well-to-do Santāl villager requires to purchase is salt, and this is paid for in kind,—it may be by rice, or by the dried flowers of the *mahuā* tree, or by any other commodity of which he happens to possess more than his family will require for their own use.

Many of the Santāls are now labourers pure and simple, having no land at all. These are much sought after by the managers of coal mines and tea gardens on account of their industry and endurance. They prefer, however, to remain in the land of their birth on a much lower wage than they might earn elsewhere; for in Sārengā the cooly earns only 9 pice a day and the *kāmin* or female labourer 6 pice, and they have to keep themselves, whereas near Calcutta men and women can earn 4 annas or even more a day in addition to being provided with food. Still, at certain seasons of the year thousands of Santāls may be seen leaving the district in order to obtain work in the fields some five or six days' journey to the east. Often some of the members of the smaller cultivating families go eastward for two or three months in the year, and they usually return with enough cash not only to pay the rent for their land, but also to clear off any little shop debts that the old folk at home may have incurred.

They still largely talk Santāli, a language which has been reduced to writing only in recent years. This language, however, is not taught in the schools in the district, and the boys and girls are handicapped badly in having to take their examinations in Bengali. In spite of this, they often manage to hold their own in competition with Bengalis of equal age, and one boy trained in the Wesleyan Mission schools passed the Entrance examination in 1907. But what is perhaps even more encouraging is the fact that in some villages there are now a number of fairly well educated Santāls—intelligent, sober, thrifty cultivators of the soil, against whom the wiles of the money-lender should have small chance of success.

The Santāls have a well-established and fairly complete system of self-government. The headman of each village, who is known as the *Mānjhi*, is in theory the owner of the village lands, and alone has the power of offering the village sacrifices; when engaged in his priestly work, he is known as the *Liaya*. The *Mānjhi* has three men to assist him in looking after the social and religious welfare of the villagers, known as the *Jog-Mānjhi*, the *Parāmānik* and the *Kotāl*. All four offices are hereditary, and their incumbents are responsible for the due performance of all village ceremonies, such as those observed at birth, marriage and death. They give moral instruction to the young, advice to the perplexed, consolation to the bereaved, and, according to their light, endeavour to do good to their village. Over each group of villages there is an officer known as a *Parganait*, to whom an appeal can at any time be made. Should his decision be disputed, a final appeal lies to the whole body of *Parganaits*. These

meetings of *Parganaits* usually take place at night at some one or other of the great hunts, when perhaps 6,000 or 8,000 men camp out in the jungle at some particular spot, to which they have come from all quarters of the compass. Except for disputes about land, it is seldom that any disagreements which may arise find their way into the law courts. But the gradual dispossession of their headmen from their lands and the growing power of the Hindu *mahājans* in their villages are tending to lessen the power and influence of the Santāl tribunals. Still, as they alone possess, and are likely to continue to possess, the power of outcasting members of the tribe, and thus cutting a man off from all social and religious contact with his fellows, it is unlikely that it will ever be possible to neglect their influence in dealing with the Santāl either as an individual or a people.

The internal structure of the race is also well preserved. They are divided into 12 tribes or septs, each distinguished by its own family name. Marriage in the same sept is strictly forbidden, and it is probably this fact that is largely responsible for the fine physique of the race. The practice of infant marriage is a growing one, but it is at present far from being customary in this district. Sometimes, when the first wife is childless, a Santāl will marry a second wife, but polygamy is very unusual. It also happens sometimes that a young wife runs away from her mother-in-law's house back to her father's home; and should she repeat the offence a few times, the price paid to her family will probably be returned to her husband and the marriage dissolved. But her value in the marriage market will have been considerably reduced by her independent conduct. The Santāls, like the Hindus, burn their dead. But the burial ceremony is not completed, nor the happiness of the released spirit ensured, until a small portion of the skull has been carried by a friend of the departed to the banks of the Dāmodar (the sacred river of the Santāls) and cast into its waters.

The religion of the Santāls is of a primitive nature, its main feature being sacrifices made to a number of village and household deities. The village deities reside in the sacred *sāl* trees usually found near the head of the village street, although at times only a stone is found indicating the spot where the trees once stood. The household deities are supposed to reside in a little apartment reserved for their use in every house, however small. Grain and other things are often stored in this apartment, but it is a sacred spot, all the household sacrifices being made at the entrance to it, and no female from any other house may

ever enter it. The names of the household deities are kept secret, and are known only to the head of the family. Generally, among the village deities the spirit of the founder of the village, and among the family deities those of departed ancestors are worshipped. The sacrifices usually consist of chickens; but not infrequently goats, and at times even cows, are offered, whilst one of the Santāl deities has a special preference for the flesh of the pig. The flesh of the animals offered to the deities is consumed by the sacrificers and their friends, and the feast is almost invariably accompanied by drinking and dancing.

A strong belief in witchcraft is firmly established; and the fact that the female members of the community are supposed to have the power of becoming witches is probably, in part at least, accountable for the high esteem in which they are held by the men of the tribe. Should sickness or misfortune overtake anyone, resource is had at once to a *Kabirāj* (literally, a doctor), one of whom is found in every village. This celebrity has the power of divination by means of *sāl* leaves. When consulted, he takes two leaves and rubs oil on them; then he presses them together; and afterwards he separates them and studies the marks made by the oil. From these he is able to say whether the misfortune is due to sickness pure and simple, or to an evil spirit, or to the malevolence of a witch. If it said to be due to a witch, this is supposed to be outside the domain of the *Kabirāj*, and resource is had to the *Jān* or witch doctor, who alone can pronounce authoritatively whether any misfortune is due to witchcraft, and alone can locate the witch. The latter is a much more dreaded foe than a mere spirit, for the latter can be exorcized by a *Kabirāj*, whereas all that one can do with a witch is to use moral suasion, the most effective form of which is believed to be corporal chastisement. The *Jān* also has the power of divining from *sāl* leaves, but the secret of his greatness—and he is indeed great in the Santāl world—lies in the fact that he is a spirit medium and that his pronouncements are made when he is under intense spiritual influence, when, as a Santāl tells you, the *wurntig* has taken possession of him. In almost every village there are one or two men who possess the power of putting themselves under the influence of certain spirits, and their aid is frequently sought in the village sacrifices and ceremonies. But their influence is trifling compared with that of the *Jān*, who is often resorted to not only by Santāls, but also by low caste Hindus, many of whom firmly believe in his power of casting out the demon of cholera from any village that may be attacked.

Hook swinging was, until the last few years, practised in many of the villages near Sārengā, and is still practised in spite of the efforts which have been made to suppress it, but it is seldom that a European can get news of it. The Santāls were as eager to swing as the Hindus, and at one festival some four years ago there were six swings kept busy from early morning until the sun was well nigh overhead. So anxious were the people to secure their turn that frequently two men were lashed together on to the arm of the revolving cross bar, to swing suspended with all their weight taken by a couple of hooks inserted into the muscles of their backs.

The chief amusements of the people are dancing, hunting and cock-fighting; and among these dancing has a foremost place as the national pastime of this primitive people. Generally, but not invariably, only the women and girls dance, and the men play the part of musicians. The women range themselves in a large circle, sometimes two or three rows deep, standing shoulder to shoulder; and half face the centre of the circle, in which the men career wildly about, beating the national drums (*nāgrā*) and marking time for the dancers, who move gracefully in a stately fashion round and round the circle, slightly advancing and retiring the while. The dance is a harmless and even pretty pastime in itself, but unfortunately it is associated with drinking and its consequent vices. Every now and again the dancers break forth into a weird plaintive kind of chant, somewhat startling when heard for the first time, but not at all unpleasant. All the Santāls' music appears to a stranger to be like a wailing funeral dirge, but it possesses a certain fascination of its own.

Hunting is another favourite amusement and is practised on a large scale every year in the month of April, *i.e.*, as soon as the *sāl* trees have shed their leaves and progress through the jungle is practicable, and before the work of rice cultivation begins in earnest. The men then swarm through the jungles in their thousands, with their dogs, their bows and arrows, their axes and spears, and woe betide the hare, the jungle-fowl, the peacock, or the deer that crosses their path. Should a leopard charge the line, he may manage to kill or maul one or two of the hunters, but the Santāl's bow and the spear almost invariably prevail in the end; and when the hunt is over, his skin stuffed with straw will probably be carried round in triumph from village to village, and the fortunate slayer of the common foe congratulated and feasted.

Cock-fighting is exceedingly popular, and nearly every large Santāl village has its own appointed day each week for the

murgī lauri as it is called. Often five or six pairs of cocks are fighting at once, in the centre of a ring of some 200 men usually squatting on the ground, who are keenly excited in the issue of any fight in which their own or their particular friends' cocks are engaged, but take little interest in the others. Spurs, consisting of keen curved blades, are lashed on to the legs of the cocks by the master of the ceremonies, who gets a leg of each cock that is despatched. These ensure a quick termination of the fight, one rush of the combatants often being enough to bring it to a close.

CHAPTER IV.

PUBLIC HEALTH.

CLIMATE.

ı the western portion of the district the climate is dry and, ı the whole, healthy. The greater portion of the country is gh and undulating, the soil is porous and well-drained, and ıe people suffer comparatively little from malarial affections. owards the east of the Bishnupur subdivision the land is lowing and badly drained, and the climate is unhealthy and malaous. This tract adjoins the malarious parts of the Burdwān and ooghly districts; and it is noticeable that when the Burdwān ver was introduced from the adjoining thānas of Galsi and handghosh in Burdwān, it caused a heavy mortality here, hile its westward progress was checked on reaching the high ound in the west of the subdivision. The thānas of Indās d Kotalpur are particularly unhealthy, extensive areas being ter-logged, while the country is studded with large tanks ntaining unwholesome water, from which the people obtain their inking supply.

VITAL STATISTICS.

Previous to 1892, there were several changes in the system registering births and deaths. In 1869 the duty of reporting aths was imposed on the village *chaukīdārs*, and in 1876 system was extended to births; but the returns received were incomplete that they were soon discontinued, and, except in ns, deaths alone were registered until 1892, when the collec- of statistics of births as well as of deaths was ordered, and system now in vogue was introduced. Under this system l occurrences are reported by the *chaukīdārs* to the police, and latter submit monthly returns to the Civil Surgeon, by whom istics for the whole district are prepared. The statistics thus ıined are sufficiently accurate for the purpose of calculating approximate growth of the population and of showing the ıtive healthiness or unhealthiness of different years; but little iance can be placed on the classification of diseases to which aths are attributed, owing to want of medical knowledge on part of the reporting agency, which causes the *chaukīdār* to gard fever as a general cause of death.

The statistics shew that the population is steadily growin largely because the Burdwān fever epidemic has died ...en Throughout the nine years ending in 1901 the recorded b... ed in the exceeded the death-rate, in spite of the fact that ... ...nds and 1897 the mortality was comparatively high owing to ... unusual prevalence of cholera, and that the district was visited b famine in 1897. The evidence of a growing population supplie by these returns is confirmed by the census statistics, which sho that the population increased by 4 per cent. since the census 1891. The returns for the subsequent seven years 1901-07 ma it clear that this progress has been maintained, the number recorded births exceeding the number of deaths by 42,0(The increase is greatest among aboriginal races, such as Sant and Bauris, and no one who has seen a Santāl village a witnessed the swarms of healthy young children would be surpri at this. Santāls and Bauris, moreover, are said not to suffer fro fever and other diseases as much as the better castes of Hindu probably owing to the healthier lives they live, to their residen in the west of the district, and to their stronger diet, which oft consists of fowls and goats, and among Bauris of pigs.

The highest birth-rate returned since the present system reporting births and deaths was introduced was 41·18 per m in 1899, and the lowest was 24·19 per mille in 1892; but th is doubt about the accuracy of the latter figure, for the syst now in vogue was only introduced in that year, and since then t birth-rate has never been less than 32·56 per mille. The high death-rate hitherto returned is 34·33 in 1907, and the lowest 18·79 per mille in 1898.

PRINCIPAL DISEASES. Fever.

According to the returns submitted year after year t mortality from fever is far less than in other parts of Beng the death-rate never having been higher than 23·58 per m (in 1907), while it has been known to fall as low as 12·78 per m (in 1898). After allowing for the fact that the *chaukīdār*, reports the deaths, is apt to include a number of other dise in which the temperature rises to any height, under this h it is clear that Bānkurā is far less subject to fever than the w logged tracts further to the east. The following account of types of fever found in the district has been contributed by Civil Surgeon, Dr. V. L. Watts.

Malarial fevers.

The types of fever prevalent in the Bānkurā district m divided into two groups—the malarial and the non-mal Malarial fevers are found chiefly in the eastern thānas of Indās Kotalpur, which adjoin the district of Burdwān. In these t the soil is alluvial, the country is flat and badly drained,

re are numerous filthy tanks, some of which were originally ated from motives of piety, but have been neglected owing ifficulties incidental to divided ownership, while others the purpose of irrigation in seasons of drought. neles mosquitoes, which transmit malaria, breed in the gnant water of many of these tanks and also in the rice-fields, nich are likewise responsible for the propagation of malaria. the western portion of the district malarial fevers are nparatively rare, owing to the undulating character of the land l the pervious nature of the soil, which lend themselves to cient drainage; but, of late years, large tracts have been brought ler cultivation by a process of levelling and manuring, which ours the stagnation of water, and here malaria has made its earance. The malarial fevers observed in the district are of o varieties—the intermittent and the remittent. In the former, fever alternates with periods of remission, and the typical d and sweating stages are well marked; while in the latter temperature never comes down to normal, but the fever ws two distinct exacerbations and remissions during the day. th these varieties of malarial fever are amenable to treatment quinine; and if attended to early, organic complications om occur.

The non-malarial fevers are principally seen in the western tion of the district, where the porous laterite soil and the lulating nature of the country are unfavourable to water-ging. The following are the types commonly met with. at fever (locally called *ārhaiyā* fever, as it lasts two and alf days) occurs in the hot months of the year and is charac-ized by a sudden accession of pyrexia, the temperature often ng as high as 105°F. and coming down to normal after days or so without any treatment. The dry heat resulting the radiation of the rocky laterite soil and the use of r impregnated with peroxide of iron which permeates it, e constipation and congestion of the liver, and give rise to a ttent type of fever, which, unlike malarial fevers, does not nd to quinine, but yields, usually in the course of a fortnight, nolagogue remedies, particularly calomel. Enteric fever is mon in the municipal towns of Bānkurā, Bishnupur and mukhī. It occurs chiefly in the neighbourhood of filthy ts, and is also seen in persons living near tanks containing ioposing vegetable matter. This fever usually lasts from te to six weeks, and about half the cases prove fatal. It is n complicated with malaria. Many cases of so-called fever a, dysentery, or remittent fever, are really cases of enteric.

Non-malarial fevers.

Derangements of the stomach and bowels caused by worms or food disorders in children give rise to some kinds of low fever. Meningitis occurs as an independent affection in children, and in adults complication of fever. Cases of cerebro-spinal fever are not uncommon in persons who live in a vitiated atmosphere, and have been particularly noticed in dwelling-houses adjoining cattle-sheds and dung-hills. The disease is almost invariably fatal.

At the change of seasons, particularly from the rainy to the cold weather, catarrh, bronchitis, etc., often give rise to continued fevers, which resemble influenza. These seasonal fevers are chiefly due to great variations in the temperature common at such periods of the year, especially the sudden fall in the temperature after sunset, against which the scanty clothing of the people is a poor protection. Filariasis manifested by swollen extremities is associated with a form of fever which chiefly comes on at night. This disease is caused by the bite of the culex mosquito, which abounds in tanks, drains, etc. Elephantiasis is more common in the western than in the eastern part of the district, and is often mistaken for ague. The congestion of the nasal mucous membrane, which is exceedingly common here, sometimes gives rise to a fever called *nāshā* fever, the symptoms of which are heaviness in the head and uneasiness along the muscles of the nape of the neck. This condition is speedily relieved by puncturing the mucous membrane of the nose, aided by a brisk saline purge. Among the miscellaneous class of fevers may be mentioned the septic fever of childbed, caused by the dirty practices of the *dhāis* or native midwives and the insanitary surroundings of the lying-in room, and pleurisy, peritonitis, erysipelas, tuberculosis, etc., in all of which fever is a symptom. Many cases of so-called ague have been really cases of phthisis.

Cholera. Cholera is almost always present in a sporadic form, and sometimes becomes epidemic, the worst epidemic on record being that which occurred in 1897, when 3·30 per mille of the population died of this disease. The main source of cholera is the bad supply of drinking water in some places. The common practice is for the people to obtain their drinking water from tanks ... the are unprotected and are frequently polluted, open air de... along the banks being a common practice.

Small-pox. Small-pox is also occasionally epidemic, especial... istrict ay... Bishnupur and Sonāmukhī, where it broke out in a ... non-ma... in 1901. As a rule, however, there are no seri... nas of Ind... for except in that year and in 1902, the death-ra... In thes... lly drain...

cause has never been as high as 0·50 per mille since the present system of mortuary returns was introduced.

Leprosy is exceedingly common in Bānkurā, the census of 1901 showing that no less than 3·67 per mille among males and 1·68 per mille among females are lepers. Bānkurā, in fact, enjoys the unenviable reputation of harbouring a greater number of lepers in proportion to its population than any other tract in the whole of India. The causes of its excessive prevalence in this district are not known. Popular belief has it that leprosy is contagious and hereditary, and that the excessive use of unwholesome meat is the principal cause of the disease; the large number of lepers among meat-eaters is quoted in support of this belief. It seems at least certain that the disease is most prevalent among the labouring classes, and especially among Muhammadans, Bauris, and other aboriginal tribes, who are meat-eaters. The theory that it is due to the use of badly cured fish does not find corroboration in this district, for very little fish is imported and it enters but slightly into the diet of the people. Mr. B. De, formerly District Magistrate of Bānkurā, conjectured that the people of this part of the country must be specially liable to the disease, and pointed out that in Khulnā he found leprosy more common among the Bunās, who had gone there from Bānkurā and the adjoining districts, than among the indigenous inhabitants. No connection, moreover, can be traced with cholera, for although leprosy is worse in Bānkurā than in any other district in West Bengal, it has the smallest cholera mortality. Leprosy.

Skin diseases are more numerous than in other parts of Bengal. Syphilis, dysentery and diarrhœa are also common. Blindness is more prevalent than in most Bengal districts, no less than 121 per 100,000 males and 134 per 100,000 females being returned as blind at the census of 1901, as compared with the Provincial averages of 95 and 85 respectively. Other diseases.

Vaccination is compulsory only within the municipal areas of Bānkurā, Bishnupur and Sonāmukhī, but is not unpopular even in the tracts where it is optional. Inoculation, which was formerly common, has now disappeared; and the people in general are gradually appreciating the advantages of vaccination, as the protection it affords has practically eradicated epidemics of small-pox in some of the towns and larger villages. The number of successful vaccinations in 1906-07 was 43,769, representing 41·16 per mille of the population, as compared with the Provincial average of 35·56 per mille; while the average annual number of persons successfully vaccinated during the previous 5 years was 36·44 per mille of the population. VACCINATION.

There are 9 dispensaries in the district, including a female dispensary at Bānkurā known as the Lady Dufferin Zanāna Hospital. Of these, only three, viz., the Zanāna Hospital and the dispensaries at Bānkurā and Bishnupur, have accommodation for indoor patients. In the Bānkurā dispensary 28 beds are available for in-patients, viz., 20 males and 8 females; in the Bishnupur dispensary there are 8 beds for in-patients (6 males and 2 females); while the indoor ward of the Lady Dufferin Hospital has 2 beds. The other dispensaries are situated at Ajodhyā, Khātrā, Kotalpur, Māliārā, Raipur and Sonāmukhī. There was also a dispensary at Rol, established in 1901, but it was closed in the year 1904.

These institutions are gradually gaining popularity, especially in the malarious tracts adjoining Kotalpur, the people generally being willing to avail themselves of the benefit of the European system of medical treatment, provided it is given free of cost. They are extremely apathetic, however, in subscribing to the upkeep of the dispensaries, for well-to-do people, who can afford the cost of treatment by a private practitioner, seldom resort to a charitable dispensary for medical aid themselves and will not subscribe for the benefit of others.

There is a leper asylum in the town of Bānkurā, of which the following account has been furnished by the Rev. J. Mitchell, Principal of the Bānkurā Wesleyan College, who is at present in charge of this institution. Statistics shew that leprosy is more prevalent in Bānkurā and the neighbouring district of Mānbhūm than anywhere else in India. This fact was brought home to the Wesleyan missionaries by the number of lepers that were continually wandering about, begging in the bazar and in the villages. In the year 1901, the Rev. J. W. Ambery Smith, who was then stationed in Bānkurā, opened up negotiations with the Mission to Lepers in India and the East; and the result was that, on an appeal being made, Mrs. Bryan, a lady resident in Brighton, offered to build the whole asylum, including a church for Divine worship. This generous offer was accepted. The work was commenced in 1901, and after six months there were several buildings ready for the lepers. For several weeks, no leper came to the asylum, as there was a strong prejudice in the minds of the people against an institution established by the missionaries; but when the ice was broken, the lepers came readily, and at present (1907) there are 56 male lepers, 43 women and 7 children in the leper asylum proper. Two years later the Edith Home was built by Mr. Jackson, one of the officials of the Leper Mission, as a memorial to his child. This

Home is being used as an asylum for the untainted children of lepers. There are two departments, one for boys and the other for girls, and at present there are 10 boys and 5 girls in residence. The children are taught to read and write, and the boys are being taught useful trades. In the leper asylum the sexes are segregated, the women's compound being surrounded by a wall.

The site of the asylum is an excellent one, high, dry and healthy, and is situated about 2 miles from the town. Indeed, the asylum, especially the church with its red tiled roof, is a landmark for miles round. In the centre of the compound is a fine well with a never-failing supply of pure water. All the buildings are kept beautifully clean; the lepers are encouraged to make gardens for themselves, and those who can work assist in keeping the compound clean and tidy. Up to the present, the entire cost of maintenance has been borne by the Mission to Lepers. The lepers are well fed and happy; and it is a rare occurrence for any of them to run away. They come to the asylum simply because they wish to come, and they stay there for the same reason. Most of the lepers belong to low caste families, but there are several of high caste, and two are Brāhmans.

CHAPTER V.

AGRICULTURE.

IERAL DI- NS. AGRICULTURAL conditions differ greatly in the east and west of the district. To the east the thānas of Indās and Kotalpur, and the north of the Sonāmukhī thāna, are a continuation of the wide-spread alluvial flats of the Burdwān and Hooghly districts, and are composed of rich recent alluvium. The rest of the district is, for the most part, undulating or hilly, and the soil is mainly an infertile laterite, found in a succession of rolling with uplands intervening hollows, along which the drainage runs off to join the larger streams. Large tracts are still covered with hill, rock or jungle, or consist of arid upland ridges; and the lower slopes of these uplands and the depressions between them are practically the only lands on which a wet rice crop is grown.

The crops, as a rule, depend almost entirely on the monsoon rains, and though the quantity of rainfall is generally sufficient, crops are liable to fail more or less when it is unseasonable or badly distributed, the greatest damage being caused by a failure of the rains in September and October, when a good supply of water is needed to mature the ripening rice crop. An ample and well-distributed rainfall is especially necessary, because the country is undulating and the soil porous, thus helping rapid drainage and percolation, and because there are but few large works for the storage of rain water.

infall. The distribution of rainfall most favourable to the *āman* or winter rice, which is the staple crop, is when premonitory showers fall in May or early in June. The rain in the latter half of June and in July should be heavy, and then should come an interval of comparatively fine weather, so as to permit of weeding operations being successfully carried on. The September rains should also be heavy, shading off into fine weather with showers in October. On the sufficiency of the rainfall in September more than in any other month, depends the character of the outturn of this crop. For the *āus* or *bhādoi* rice, showers in March and the ante-monsoon showers of April are very necessary for the preparation

of the land. From April onwards rain is required at frequent intervals, but should not be copious or continuous. Autumn rice is generally sown in May or earlier, and consequently heavy rain at this time and in the month following is injurious to the sowing and successful germination of that crop. Scattered showers with intervals of sunshine, on the other hand, are very beneficial. The climatic conditions most suitable to the cultivation of the *rabi* or cold weather crops are when the monsoon rains cease early in October, after thoroughly moistening the ground, and are followed by a few showers during the remainder of that month and the first half of November. A little rain in December and also in January is requisite to enable the crops to attain their full growth.

IRRIGATION. Artificial irrigation is necessary in all parts of the district except in the east. The natural configuration of the country, which has an undulating surface intersected by numerous rivers and streams, renders the reservation of water easy enough by simply throwing embankments across the drainage lines or across small nullahs. These embankments, which are called *bāndhs*, are made at levels higher than the fields to be irrigated, and their main use is to prevent the monsoon rain draining away rapidly and to supply water to the crops in the lands below by slow percolation. There is ample room for the extension of this system. Irrigation from wells is also carried on in the upland area to a small extent, and from tanks in the alluvial flats to the east. Canal irrigation is entirely unknown, and would be impossible except perhaps in thānas Indās and Kotalpur and in the north of the Sonāmukhī thāna; elsewhere, the surface is broken up by low ridges, valleys and hills, which make any system of canal irrigation impracticable.

About a century ago the Bishnupur Rāj made a simple but effective system of irrigation channels, called the Subhankarī *daurā* or *khāl*, in the northern portion of the Sonāmukhī thāna to counteract the natural liability of that area to drought. The system consisted of several main and branch channels, fed by the monsoon, which irrigated about 80 square miles; but unfortunately many of the channels have long since silted up. In the famine of 1897 the *daurā* was partially re-excavated, and the channel deepened, by taking earth from it for making road embankments. Several important tanks and *bāndhs* were also constructed in the Gangājalghāti thāna, viz., a dam was built across the Jeolājor at the ninth mile of the Gangājalghāti-Sāltorā road; the Kusthal *bāndh*, Charuri tank, and Vaishnava *bāndh* were excavated at Sāltorā; and much was done to improve the

sacred Siva Gangā tank at the foot of the Bihārināth hill, and also the Krishnapur and Uddhabpur *bāndhs*. Other minor sources of irrigation are the Jamunā and Krishnā *bāndhs*, two artificial lakes at Bishnupur, which supply water to a fairly large area in the vicinity of the town.

The most important schemes proposed for the improvement of irrigation are the re-excavation of the Subhankarī *khāl*, the erection of a dam across the Harinmāri *khāl* in the Bishnupur subdivision, the re-excavation of the Mathgodā *bāndh*, the repair of the Syāmsundarpur *bāndh*, and the construction of a weir across the Birai river. The re-excavation of the Subhankarī *khāl* has been condemned from an engineering point of view. The re-excavation of the Mathgodā *bāndh* has been taken up, under the supervision of the District Engineer, from a fund raised by private subscriptions aided by a District Board grant. The Syāmsundarpur *bāndh* formerly belonged to an indigo concern, but is now owned by a zamīndār in embarrassed circumstances. It is estimated that the repair of the *bāndh* would cost about Rs. 3,000, and that, if repaired, it would irrigate a considerable area.

Special attention has lately been drawn to the Birai river scheme. This scheme provides for the irrigation of about 20 square miles from a weir constructed across the Birai about 7 miles above its confluence with the Dhalkisor. In the year 1901, the late Mr. Maconchy, Superintending Engineer, made a preliminary enquiry to ascertain if a canal from the Birai river could be recommended as a protective work. He found that the catchment area was about 70 square miles, and the conclusions he came to, which were accepted by Government, were that (1) the catchment of the stream is so small that in a season of drought the supply of water would either fail altogether or would be so small as to be of very little use; and (2) that there was no prospect whatever of the canal being remunerative to Government. The scheme was therefore regarded as impracticable. It was estimated that a detailed survey would cost Rs. 4,600.

Recently efforts have been made locally to have this project taken up, and the following reply has been given (in March 1908) in the Legislative Council to a question on the subject:—"There is no justification for an expenditure of this amount from the general revenues on work which would be of no practical use. It will, however, be arranged to have observations made of the flow of water in the stream to ascertain definitely what area could be irrigated at a time of drought. On the present information it would appear that a channel made by the land-owners themselves,

similar to the *pains* of which there are so many in the Gayā district, would be more suitable than a Government canal."

The soil in the Indās and Kotalpur thānas and in the north of the Sonāmukhī thāna is composed of recent alluvium, and is loamy and clayey. Elsewhere, it consists, for the most part, of sandy loam or a lateritic gravel. Generally speaking, the soil of the high lands (*dāngā*) is poor, but some varieties of early rice, as well as maize and *rabi* crops, are grown there. The soil of the low lands and valleys is generally fertile, as it is enriched by the detritus washed down from the higher levels. It is commonly divided into two classes—(1) *sāli*, which is restricted to the cultivation of rice, and (2) *sunā*, in which various kinds of crops are grown, such as sugarcane, oil-seeds, superior varieties of rice, and, in the richest soils, tobacco, *pān* and vegetables. There is this further distinction that *sāli* lands are allowed to lie fallow every third or fourth year, while the *sunā* soil is never permitted to remain uncultivated. Soils.

The cultivators themselves recognize a number of minor distinctions according to the composition and quality of the land. The different classes of land thus recognized are as follows. *Sāli* land is divided into seven classes, viz., *sāli jol*, or low marshy rice land; *sāli kanāli* or low rice land bordering on river banks or marshes, or lying between high lands; *sāli māth* or large flat plains growing *āman* or winter rice; *sāli karpa*, or low marshy lands also growing *āman* rice; *sāli matiāl*, or marshy land with a black soil, used for winter rice; and *sāli garanji*, or sloping rice land.

Sunā land again is divided into four varieties, viz., *nij sunā*, or land growing *āus* or autumn rice, with a second or winter crop of pulses or oil-seeds; *sunā karpa*, or *sunā* lands of the first quality growing the finer qualities of rice, sugarcane, cotton, peas, mustard, etc.; *sunā ikshu*, or *sunā* land particularly suited for sugarcane cultivation, but also growing rice of good quality, cotton, pulses, etc.; *sunā do karpa*, or land growing two superior crops in the year.

There are five classes of *dāngā* or high land, viz., *je dāngā* or high dry land growing pulses, hemp and oil-seeds; *til dāngā* or high dry land producing *til*; *kalai dāngā*, or high dry land on which the pulse called *biri kalai* is grown; *sarishā dāngā*, or high dry land producing *sarishā* or mustard; and *masurī dāngā*, or high dry land producing *masurī kalai*, another kind of pulse.

Other varieties are *je karpa*, or cotton land; *bāstu*, or land upon which the homestead is built; *udbāstu*, or land surrounding the homestead; *bānsberā*, or bamboo land; *pān baraj*, or betel enclosures; and *bāgāt*, or orchard land, on which fruit trees, such as mango, guava, jack, etc., are grown.

The following table shows the normal acreage of the crops of the district and their percentage on the normal net cropped area.

Name of crop.	Normal acreage.	Percentage on normal net cropped area.	Name of crop.	Normal acreage.	Percentage on normal net cropped area.
Winter rice ...	507,000	84	Summer rice ...	800	...
Sugarcane ...	15,000	3	Wheat	5,500	1
			Barley	3,300	1
Total *aghani* crops	522,000	87	Gram	6,500	1
Autumn rice ...	21,900	4	Other *rabi* cereals and pulses	9,000	2
Jowār	800	...	Other *rabi* food crops	3,500	1
Bājra	1,100	...			
Maruā	3,500	1	Linseed ...	1,000	...
Indian corn ...	8,400	1	Rape and mustard	7,400	1
Other *bhādoi* cereals and pulses	2,000	...	*Til* (*rabi*) ...	2,700	...
			Other oil-seeds	8,000	1
			Tobacco ...	1,500	...
Til (*bhādoi*) ...	3,300	1	Late cotton ...	2,000	...
Other *bhādoi* non-food crops ...	1,200	...	Other *rabi* non-food crops ...	1,000	2
Total *bhādoi* crops	42,200	7	Total *rabi* crops	63,200	10
Twice cropped area	30,000	5	Orchards and garden produce ...	8,000	1
Forest ...	88,000	15			

The above statistics will show that the staple crop of the district is rice, of which there are two main classes, viz., *āman* or winter rice, and *āus* or autumn rice. *Aman* rice, which predominates to the exclusion of other crops, is sown in April or May, transplanted in July or August, and reaped about December. No less than 21 principal varieties are grown. The *āus* or autumn rice is sown broadcast on the fields in May, and reaped in September; it is of two varieties, viz, *āus* proper and *kelāsh*.

For an *āman* rice crop the soil requires to be ploughed four times before the sowing of the seed. The first ploughing takes place early in February or March, and the three following ones between that time and August, according as the season is wet or dry. The process of sowing, weeding and reaping is the same here as in other parts of Bengal. A small ridge or embankment is raised round each plot or field after the ground is considered sufficiently ploughed; the cultivator then lets in water from the tank, reservoir, or dammed-up water-course from which he obtains his water-supply. This water is allowed to stand some time, to assist in decomposing the stubble or roots of the previous year, and to incorporate them, and the manure they form, more closely

with the soil. The ground then receives its final ploughing, after which it is harrowed and levelled, and the seed is sown. About two months after the sowing, the young plants are transplanted into other plots, at regular intervals apart. While the plant is still young, the earth is gently loosened round the roots by hand, or sometimes more roughly by the plough. The crop is kept carefully weeded; and when nearly ripe, a bamboo is laid horizontally on the ground and drawn over the plants, thus laying them down regularly in one direction. The crop is reaped in December and January, and bound up in small bundles. It is subsequently either beaten out on a board by men or trodden out by cattle. Such of the stubble as may not be required for other purposes is left on the ground to rot and renovate the land.

Sugarcane. The only other important *aghani* crop is sugarcane, which is sown in April or May and cut in the following February or March. The fields are ploughed and manured in either of the first two months, and when the ground is sufficiently prepared, the cane cuttings are dibbled in. They are kept well irrigated during the dry months, the ground being weeded as occasion requires, and the canes are ready for cutting in the following February or March.

***Bhādoi* crops.** The normal area of *bhādoi* crops is 42,200 acres or 7 per cent. of the net cropped area, and of this area no less than 21,900 acres or 4 per cent. are occupied by *āus* or autumn rice. Of other crops, the most important are maize, *maruā* (*Eleusine Coracana*) and *til* or gingelly.

***Rabi* crops.** *Rabi* crops account for 63,200 acres or 10 per cent. of the normal net cropped area. Among these wheat, rape, mustard and other oil-seeds are most important. Other miscellaneous crops include *arhar*, peas and gram, all of which are grown on dry soil.

Other crops. Another important crop is *pān*, which is sown in the month of June or July, the leaves being picked at all seasons of the year after the plant is 12 months old. Indigo was formerly grown on a large scale, but the cultivation has now disappearede ntirely. Even when it was grown, it was found that the soil was not well adapted for it, the produce being less and the plant of a smaller size than that grown in other districts.

EXTENSION OF CULTIVATION. Statistics showing how great the extension of cultivation has been are not available, but it is known that the cultivation of rice has increased considerably within the last half century by the reclamation of extensive jungle tracts. This process is still going on, especially round the villages of the Santāls, who are the natural enemies of jungle. It is the custom to sow the newly

cultivated lands for two or three years after reclamation with inferior crops, as they are not at first capable of producing the superior sorts. By this means the lands gradually increase in fertility, and become fit for better kinds of grain.

IMPROVEMENT OF METHODS.

Until recent years but little was done to improve the quality of the crops grown, to introduce new crops, or to substitute superior cereals for inferior kinds. The advantages of rotation, however, are understood, and crops are commonly rotated on all lands growing sugarcane and other exhaustive crops. A common method of rotation is as follows. After cutting a crop of sugarcane in February or March, the plough is passed through the field, and a crop of *til* seed is sown, which is cut and garnered in May or June. The soil is then well ploughed, and in June or July is sown with *āus* or autumn rice, which is reaped in September or October. After the rice crop is off the ground, the field is again ploughed twice, and a crop of mustard (often mixed with peas) is sown. These crops ripen and are cut in January or February, when the field is again well manured and ploughed, so as to be ready for another crop of sugarcane, which is planted about April. In some parts cotton alternates with sugarcane after the mustard is cleared off the ground. Practically the only manure used is the black mud scraped from the bottom of tanks, which with ashes and stubble is used for the rice fields, but cow-dung is sometimes added for *sunā* lands growing more valuable crops.

Agricultural Association.

It is hoped that an improvement in the quality of the crops and the methods of cultivation will follow the establishment of the Bānkurā District Agricultural Association. This Association was started in September 1905, as a branch of the Burdwān Divisional Agricultural Association, and the number of members has now risen to sixteen. It has shown considerable activity since its establishment. A seed supply branch has been opened, and a large quantity of selected seeds, manures and improved implements have been distributed to members and agriculturists in the district, in some cases free, and in other cases at cost price. The Association has also published and distributed leaflets in Bengali dealing with improved methods of cultivation, and has succeeded in introducing the cultivation of long stapled cotton, of special crops like groundnut, and of valuable crops like potatoes, and also the system of green manuring, which hitherto was practically unknown in the district. Some of the members have also undertaken demonstration work as a means of diffusing agricultural knowledge among the cultivators of their neighbourhood, and others have availed themselves of the provisions of

the Land Improvement Loans Act to improve the means of irrigation in their estates. The Association has held an agricultural and industrial exhibition each year since its establishment, in order to stimulate the agriculture and industries of the district, and has also constructed at Bānkurā a building containing a meeting room, a seed store, and a library, in which agricultural books and papers are kept for the use of the public.

The breeds of cattle, ponies, sheep and goats in this district are described as being of the poorest kind, the animals being generally weak, stunted and small. There is ample pasturage in the west of the district, where there are large areas under jungle, but not in the east, and especially in thānas Indās and Kotalpur. In the latter tract the extension of cultivation of late years has converted the pasture grounds lying on the outskirts of the villages into paddy fields, and consequently there is considerable difficulty in feeding the cattle, when the crops are on the fields. CATTLE.

CHAPTER VI.

NATURAL CALAMITIES.

LIABILITY TO FAMINE. THE district is liable to famine owing to its dependence on the rice crop, and to the absence of a complete system of irrigation works to counteract the effects of a failure of the rains. The normal acreage of the rice crop is no less than 529,000 acres or 88 per cent. of the normal net cropped area, and winter rice alone occupies 507,000 acres or 84 per cent. Though a certain amount of artificial irrigation is carried on by means of tanks and of embankments thrown across the line of drainage, the greater part of the rice crop is dependent entirely upon the rainfall, and this must be not only sufficient, but also well-distributed. A deficient or badly distributed rainfall is specially disastrous to rice, for the prospects of the early rice are seriously prejudiced by scanty rainfall at the beginning of the monsoon, while its premature termination is injurious to the winter rice crop. If there is a failure of both these crops, the people have little to subsist on except maize and inferior millet crops, until the harvesting of *rabi* crops in the latter part of March. The *rabi* crops again are grown on a comparatively small area, occupying only 10 per cent. of the normal net cropped area, and in a year of short rainfall they are deficient both in yield and area, owing to want of moisture at the time of sowing. The result is that if the rice crop fails completely, distress inevitably ensues.

TRACTS LIABLE TO FAMINE. The experience of the last famine, that of 1897, shows that the tracts most liable to suffer from famine are the Gangājalghāti thāna, the north of the Sonāmukhī thāna, the Chhātnā outpost, the Raipur thāna and the Simlāpāl outpost. The Gangājalghāti thāna consists largely of jungle, with villages and cultivation scattered here and there. It comprises two outposts, the Sāltorā outpost, which contains hilly country in parts and a considerable area of jungle, and the Mejiā outpost, which has but little jungle. The population generally is distinctly poor, the soil is inferior, and even in ordinary times the people are not well-off. There are no wealthy zamīndārs; and the number of landless labourers, belonging chiefly to the Bauri caste, is conspicuous. Road communications are on the whole fair, but the Dāmodar on the

north cuts off this portion of the district from the railway. The northern part of the Sonāmukhī thāna is nearly all under cultivation, but most of it is very liable to drought. About a century ago the Bishnupur Rāj made a simple but effective system of irrigation channels, called the Subhankarī *daurā*, to counteract the natural tendency of this area to drought, but the channels have silted up and become useless. The Chhātnā outpost consists, to a considerable extent, of jungle. The population is poor and has not many resources, a considerable number of its inhabitants being Santāls and Sāmantas; the latter, who call themselves Kshattriyas or Rājputs, are mostly poor, are averse to work, and consequently suffer severely in time of famine.

The Raipur thāna is a hilly tract mainly under jungle, but is intersected by the river Kāsai, and contains some large areas of open country under cultivation. It is badly off for communications, and is practically cut off from the outer world. The old families of zamīndārs, locally known as Rājās, have now lost their lands and been reduced to poverty, but there are a good many substantial ryots, especially Brāhmans, who claim to be Utkal Brāhmans who migrated from Orissa. The Simlāpāl outpost adjoins Raipur on the east and its physical features are similar, except that it is not hilly. It boasts of two substantial zamīndārs known as the Rājās of Simlāpāl and Bhālāidihā, and the portion east of the river Silai has good communication with the town of Bānkurā.

It must be remembered, however, that since the famine of 1897 conditions have been considerably altered owing to the construction of the railway through the heart of the district. Thus, the Chhātnā outpost is now intersected by the railway, and other areas, which were formerely cut off from this means of transport, have been brought into communication with it by means of feeder roads.

FAMINE OF 1866.

The most terrible famine which has visited Bānkurā during the last half century was that of 1866, which was due to the failure of the winter crop in 1865. The western and south-western portion of the district bordering on Mānbhūm suffered severely, but its effects were not felt to any serious extent in its north-eastern portion adjoining Burdwān. On the other hand, there was much distress in and round Bishnupur, which at that time contained a large population of weavers. Deprived by the general distress of a market for the produce of their ordinary labour, and unable to compete in field work with those whose daily occupation is agricultural labour, their condition was specially miserable. The agricultural labourers, who live by

daily wages, were but a few degrees better off; even their labour, when employed, scarcely yielded enough for their own support and left no surplus for wife and children.

Prices had been high in 1865, and exports had been unusually heavy, for those who ordinarily kept stocks for their consumption through the coming year were tempted by the high rates to sell off what they had. Distress was already noticeable in some parts by the beginning of 1866, and in February there was a violent outbreak of cholera at Bishnupur, which was promoted by, if not directly due to, the extreme scarcity of food. The people were paralyzed by panic, and poverty-stricken to such a degree, that they could not even pay the cost of burning their dead, and threw down the corpses outside the town. Prompt measures were taken, however, for the removal of corpses, and the epidemic was checked. In the meantime, distress continued through the east and the south of the district, and in March the shopkeepers at Bānkurā combined not to sell rice below the rate of 7½ standard seers. Relief works were accordingly started in the town, but at the end of April they had to be discontinued for want of funds. Some of the labourers were thereupon sent to work on the chord line of the East Indian Railway beyond Rānīganj, but soon returned, complaining that the standard of work was so high that, in their emaciated condition, they found it impossible to earn more than two annas a day, a sum which was not sufficient to keep body and soul together at the ruling price of rice.

At the end of May Mr. W. T. Tucker, the Judge, applied to Government for a grant in order to carry on relief measures, for it was found impossible to provide, from local resources, the relief necessary to alleviate "the fearful distress prevailing." A grant of Rs. 5,000 was given, which was expended on the importation of rice from Calcutta and its sale at cost price. These sales were carried on in the town of Bānkurā from June to November at the rate of 10 seers for the rupee, except in August, when the price was 8 seers per rupee. The necessity of this relief and the general destitution of the people may be gathered from the fact that on the 13th July the Committee wrote that "there is actually no rice in the Bānkurā bazar, and people are entirely supported at present by the rice which they purchase daily from the Committee."

While these measures were being carried out at Bānkurā, nothing was done for a long time at Bishnupur, which at this time was under the Subdivisional Officer of Garhbetā. Subscriptions had been collected, but the Subdivisional Officer made no special report to the Collector as to the necessity of relief work, said

that he had no time to look after the work of relief, and admitted that, although the money collected was lying idle in his hands, nothing was done from April to July (when he left Garhbetā), because there was no agency at Bishnupur capable of carrying it on. On the 3rd August the Committee learnt that the weavers of Bishnupur were in terrible state of destitution, and a separate fund was at once raised for the purpose of enabling them to carry on their trade.

Matters were equally bad in the Raipur thāna to the south-west, which was then included in the Mānbhūm district. Towards the end of May it was reported that hardly a night passed in which some house about Raipur was not attacked by large bodies of armed men and grain plundered. The property stolen consisted of nothing but food, and any valuables found in a house were left by the dacoits as useless. Rice could not be got for love or money; even the better classes were forced to eat *mahuā* and other jungle products, while numbers eked out their scanty subsistence by devouring the grass of the fields. Relief works were started about the end of this month at different points between Raipur and Ambikānagar; but an officer, visiting the Ambikānagar depôt at the end of August, reported that many would not come to the centres of relief through fear that they might be made to work, and that though the Santāls were suffering severely, not one was to be seen at the depôt, as they looked upon begging or receiving alms as more disgraceful than stealing. According to another account, they would not eat rice cooked by a Brāhman, and all the cooks at the depôts were Brāhmans. Whole villages appeared to be depopulated, and rice was selling at 3½ and 4½ seers per rupee.

Besides the relief works in this thāna, there was a relief depôt at Bānkurā, a second 3 miles from the town, and a third at Bishnupur. In September the incoming of the *bhādoi* harvest brought down the price of rice to 12 seers per rupee, and relief operations were suspended early in November, except in Bishnupur, where they were continued till the end of that month. In many places, however, the relief had come too late, and meanwhile the migration, suffering and mortality were very great. Even at the end of August, when it was reported that distress was increasing on all sides and that numbers were dying on the roads from exhaustion, being unable to reach the depôts, the application of the Committee for another grant of Rs. 10,000 was refused, though a grant of Rs. 4,000 was eventually given in the latter half of September. The efforts of the Committee, moreover, were mainly concentrated on the

town of Bānkurā and its neighbourhood; and as late as September 1866, Sir William Hunter on a visit to Bishnupur wrote:— "I found Bishnupur, once the most populous place in Bengal, a city of paupers." Between 2,000 and 3,000 persons were fed daily; but cholera had broken in its most virulent form, and the relief was not sufficient. "Thirty-five poor wretches were dying daily of hunger, and multitudes of deserted orphans were roaming the streets and subsisting on worms and snails."*

AMINE F 1874.

In the famine of 1874 relief measures were promptly and thoroughly organized, and the distress was not comparable to that which prevailed in 1866. This famine was due to a failure of the rice crop in two successive years. The outturn of this crop in 1872 was estimated at only one-half of the average, and in 1873 the rainfall was unseasonably distributed, being scanty in May and June, excessive in July and August, and quite insufficient in September and October, with the result that the rice crop, including both *āus* and *āman*, gave a little less than half of the average outturn. Relief measures had to be undertaken in March 1874, and by the 1st June 11,000 persons were in receipt of charitable relief, while 3,650 were employed on relief works. The greatest distress occurred in July owing to the scanty rainfall, for cultivation was delayed, the usual demand for field labour failed to arise, prices became dearer, and private charity ceased to support the destitute poor. In these circumstances, distress spread fast, and at the end of July over 39,000 persons were in receipt of charitable relief and 4,100 were employed on the relief works. In the end, however, there was a good outturn of the rice crop, and it was found possible to bring relief operations to a close at the beginning of October. The number of persons relieved was equivalent to 107,828 persons gratuitously relieved and to 21,365 persons relieved by wages for a period of one month.

CARCITY F 1885.

In 1885 relief measures were again necessary. There had been failure of crops more or less pronounced in the two preceding years, and in 1885 some distress, necessitating the establishment of systematic relief operations, became apparent. The supply of food, however, was always plentiful in the market, and prices can hardly be said to have reached famine rates, the highest price of rice in Bānkurā being 16¼ seers per rupee. The classes who stood in need of relief were labourers, beggars, and others who, in ordinary times, subsist on the charity of their neighbours; and the difficulty lay in the fact that the failure of the local crops restricted the labour market and forced on Government the

* F. H. Skrine, *Life of Sir William Wilson Hunter*, (1901) pp. 114, 115.

necessity of providing employment for those whose circumstances prevented them from migrating in search of work. The distress was by no means extensive, the highest daily average of persons receiving charitable relief being only 2,860 (at the end of July); and it was found possible to close the relief centres by the end of September.

FAMINE OF 1897.

The last famine from which the district has suffered was that of 1897. In the year 1895-96 the rainfall was very deficient for the winter rice crop, which in this district is the main food crop, and the result was a total outturn of only 9⅔ annas of winter rice for the whole district. The Bishnupur subdivision, which contains the best rice lands in Bānkurā suffered most, for the acreage fell from 185,000 acres in 1894-95 to 70,000 acres in 1895-96, and the outturn from 16 annas to 7 annas, while in the tract between the Dāmodar and Sālī river in the Sonāmukhī and Indās thānas the crop was almost a total failure. The headquarters subdivision also suffered, the outturn of the *bhādoi* and *rabi* crops being only 10 and 12½ annas respectively, though it must be remembered that these crops occupy only a small proportion of the area under cultivation. The rainfall of 1896-97 was again very unsatisfactory for the winter rice crop, the outturn of which for the whole district was estimated at 9 annas or less, while it was only 4 annas in several areas, viz., the western part of the Gangājalghāti thāna and its outposts (Sāltorā and Mejiā), the north of the Sonāmukhī thāna, the Raipur thāna, and the Simlāpāl outpost. The great rice producing thānas of Indās and Kotalpur in the Bishnupur subdivision happily had a comparatively good crop of 10 annas each; but the Tāldāngrā and Barjorā outposts had only a 6 anna crop and the Chhātnā outpost only a 5 anna crop. The *bhādoi* crop, however, which consists mainly of rice, was fully up to the average, the rainfall having only failed from about the 19th September, while the unimportant *rabi* crop had a 7 anna outturn.

Not only did the short winter crop of 1896 succeed a short one in 1895, especially in the north of Sonāmukhī and the west of Gangājalghāti, but high prices were caused by abnormal export to other districts. The result was that, before the end of October 1896, common rice sold at Bānkurā at 10 or 11 seers a rupee, as against 16¼ seers in the previous month, 17¾ seers in October 1895, and 18¾ seers in October 1894. The remote south-west corner of the district, comprising the Raipur thāna and part of the Simlāpāl outpost, did not suffer, however, from high prices nearly so soon as other affected areas, owing to there being no export on account of bad communications and the distance from

large marts. In spite of this early rise, the price of rice was $11\frac{1}{2}$ seers at Bānkurā and 11 seers at Bishnupur by the end of December; and it remained wonderfully firm till the end of April 1897. In the first half of May, it suddenly rose to 10 seers at both places, and even higher in the affected areas of Gangājalghāti and Sonāmukhī, where it was 9 to 8 seers per rupee.

Unmistakable distress appeared in May, when gratuitous relief had to be given and relief works opened in the Gangājalghāti thāna and in the north of the Sonāmukhī thāna; in the south of the latter thāna relief operations were not necessary till the end of July. The Chhātnā outpost showed signs of being affected about the same time. Relief also had to be given in part of the Bānkurā thāna adjoining the Chhātnā outpost and in the Tāldāngrā outpost, the Indpur outpost, the Khātrā thāna and the Barjorā outpost, but it was not considered necessary to declare these tracts affected. The distressed area comprised 1,053 square miles with a population of 413,000 persons, and the persons relieved were mostly landless labourers, belonging chiefly to the Bauri caste, but also to other low castes, such as Bāgdis, Hāris and Khairās, and including a considerable number of Santāls. The relief works were brought to a close at the end of September. The total number of persons employed on relief works was 318,577, representing an average of 2,377 per diem, or 0·5 per cent. of the population affected, while the total number of persons gratuitously relieved was 855,204, representing a daily average of 6,528, or 1·58 per cent. of the population affected.

FLOODS. Other calamities besides famine are of rare occurrence. Small inundations frequently occur owing to the suddenness with which the rivers and streams rise in the rainy season; and the lands bordering on the rivers suffer accordingly, so much so that in many places they are permanently allowed to remain waste and uncultivated. No flood, however, has occurred within the experience of the present generation on a scale sufficiently large to affect the general prosperity of the district. The most serious flood in recent years was that which occurred in June 1897 owing to the abnormal height to which the Kāsai and Dāmodar rose. Along the banks of the Dāmodar the *āus* rice crop was much damaged, 4,000 or 5,000 *bighās* of rich soil were buried under sand, and some villages were washed away with everything in them. There was no loss of life, but relief had to be given in the north of the Sonāmukhī thāna to 1,386 persons, who had been rendered homeless by the flood. Such floods, however, are fortunately rare, and, as a rule, only partial and local damage is caused.

CHAPTER VII.

RENTS, WAGES AND PRICES.

No settlement of rents has yet been carried out in the district as a whole, but it is reported that the following rates of rent are general. In the Bishnupur subdivision the actual cultivator pays to his immediate landlord an average rent varying from Rs. 7-8 to Rs. 6 and Rs. 4-8 per acre of *sāli* or rice land according to its productive power. In the headquarters subdivision the rental paid for such land varies greatly, ranging from Rs. 5-4 to Rs. 4-2 in the Ondā thāna, and from Rs. 4-8 to Rs. 3-12 in thānas Khātrā and Gangājalghāti, while in the Bānkurā thāna the rates are Rs. 6, Rs. 5-4, Rs. 4-8 and Rs. 3-12 per acre. For land growing *rabi* crops the rates in the Bishnupur subdivision are Rs. 12, Rs. 6-12 and Rs. 5-4 per acre according to quality; and in the headquarters subdivision they are Rs. 6 and Rs. 5-4 in Ondā, Rs. 9 and Rs 6 in Khātrā, Rs. 3-12 and Rs. 3 in Gangājalghāti, and Rs. 5-4, Rs. 4-8, Rs. 3-12 and Rs. 3 per acre in the Bānkurā thāna. **RENTS. Cash rents.**

A regular settlement of rents has recently been carried out for the *ghātwāli* tenures, *i.e.*, tenures formerly granted in remuneration for military service rendered by guarding the *ghāts* or on condition of rendering police service. A fuller description of the *ghātwāli* tenures will be found in Chapter X; and it will be sufficient to state here that they may be divided broadly into three groups, known as (*i*) *sarkārī panchakī*, *i.e.*, tenures in which the *panchak* or quit-rent was realized by Government direct from the *sardār ghātwāls;* (*ii*) *be-panchakī*, or tenures in which no rent was realized; and (*iii*) *zamīndāri panchakī*, or tenures in which the quit-rents were amalgamated with the land revenue of the parent estates and realized through the zamīndārs.

Recently extensive resumptions have been made of these tenures on the basis of an amicable settlement, the *ghātwāls* being released from rendering service and recognized as tenants with rights of occupancy, while the lands have been assessed to revenue and settled with the zamīndārs. The assessments have been made according to prevailing rates as regards lands in the direct occupation of the *ghātwāls*, but as regards lands held by

them through their tenants, 75 per cent. of the rent realized by them from the latter has been accepted as the assessment. Out of the total assessment, a concession of 25 per cent. has been allowed to the *ghātwāls* in consideration of the fact that they have been enjoying the lands from generation to generation on payment of a small quit-rent. The remaining 75 pe cent. of the assessment is divided equally between Government and the zamīndārs, the Government demand being fixed in perpetuity.

The general result is that the *ghātwāli* tenures have been resumed by amicably settling the lands with the *ghātwāls*, permanently on fixed rents, in consideration of releasing them from police and other duties. The *ghātwāls* pay the rent fixed to the zamīndārs, and the zamīndārs in their turn pay the revenue assessed to the Government treasury. The maximum, minimum and average rates assessed are Rs. 7-8, Rs. 5-10 and Rs. 3-12 per acre, respectively, for different classes of *sāli* or rice land, and Rs. 12, Rs. 7-8 and Rs. 3 for *sunā* or unirrigated land.

Produce rents.

Rents are paid in kind for some holdings known as *bhāg jot*, the word *bhāg* meaning a share. In such a holding the tenant has the use of the land for a year or a season, and pays as rent a certain share of the produce of the land. Ordinarily one-half of the produce is so paid, the *bhāg jotdār* cultivating the land with his own cattle and plough, and also finding seed and manure. Occasionally the superior tenant, who engages the *bhāg jotdār*, finds the manure, in return for which he receives the straw in addition to his half share of the produce. Another class of *bhāg* tenants pay as rent two-thirds of the produce, in which case the cultivators who let out the land to them supply the seed and manure, as well as the cattle. Produce rents are also paid by a small class of peasants, called *sājās*, who only hold their lands on a temporary lease, and lead a wandering life from village to village, settling down for the time being wherever they can get temporary holdings on the best terms. The latter system is generally the result of sub-infeudation and idleness on the one hand, and of unsettled habits and poverty on the other.

WAGES.

Of recent years there has been a general rise in the price of both skilled and unskilled labour, mainly owing to the introduction of the railway and the consequent intercommunication with centres of industry. A carpenter now obtains a daily wage of 6 to 8 annas according to his skill, while masons and blacksmiths receive from 5 to 6 annas per diem. There is, however, but little demand for local skilled labour on large works, for the contractors,

who are mostly natives of the Central Provinces, seldom employ local men for the purpose, but bring artisans from their own country. Unskilled labour is paid for at the rate of 3 to 3½ annas a day. Wages are generally paid in cash in the towns, but in the villages labourers are usually paid in kind.

Village labourers. Besides the field labourers working for a daily wage, there are two special classes of labourers employed in cultivating the lands of others, who, as a rule, are paid in kind. The first consists of farm labourers called *krishāns* or *māhindārs*, who receive a share of the produce of the land they cultivate. If they supply seed and cattle for the cultivator, besides giving their manual labour, their remuneration is half of the produce, but, if the owner of the land supplies the seed and cattle, they receive only one-third of the produce. It is reported that, if they are paid in cash, their wage ranges from Rs. 30 to Rs. 36 per annum, in addition to food and clothes. The class of labourers known as *gatāniā munis*, *i.e.*, engaged labourers, are paid one or two seers of parched rice and three seers of paddy daily, and are given Rs. 2 in cash at the end of the year, besides two pieces of cloth. They are also remunerated by the grant of a piece of land, generally not exceeding one *bighā* in area, the produce of which is their own entirely. This land is called *bantāriā*, meaning land due to the holder of the yoke (*bantā*) of the plough. Sometimes also, when threshing is complete, these labourers get one or one-and-a-half *māps* of paddy, a *māp* being equivalent to 3 maunds and 28 seers; this perquisite is called *kānkrā*.

Village servants. Certain classes, who are still practically the common servants of the village community, are also largely paid in kind. One *kāmār* or smith usually works for the people of four or five villages, his chief business being the forging of ploughshares, hoes and other agricultural implements. A ploughshare generally becomes almost useless at the end of each ploughing season, and has to be re-cast and re-forged at the beginning of the next year. This the smith does, and as remuneration receives a customary fee of 10 to 15 seers of unhusked rice from every husbandman at harvest-time for each plough owned by him. For other work he is paid at contract rates, generally in money. At sacrificial ceremonies the *kāmār* also officiates as sacrificer; and in many cases he holds a small plot of rent-free land in return for his services in that capacity.

Usually one *sūtradhar* or carpenter does the work of two or more villages, his chief business being to make the wood-work of ploughs, for which he receives a certain fixed measure of rice from every cultivator. The wages of the *dhobā* or washerman

are paid either in kind or in money, but every village has not a washerman of its own, and in a poor family the females wash the clothes themselves. Families in better circumstances, however, generally send their clothes to the washerman's house, whether it is situated in their own or a neighbouring village. For furnishing a temple with earthen vessels, etc., the *kumhār* or potter, in many places, is rewarded by a small plot of rent-free land, but earthen vessels of domestic use are paid for in money.

The *māli* or gardener, who supplies flowers and garlands to the villagers on ceremonial occasions, also in some cases holds service land in remuneration of his labour; and the flowers and garlands which he supplies are paid for either in kind or in money. But most are unable to subsist solely by growing flowers and making garlands, and follow agriculture as an auxiliary means of livelihood. The *nāpit* or barber, besides shaving a certain number of families, called his *jajmāns* or customers, has to be present at marriage ceremonies and assist in the performance of certain rites. His wages usually consist of a measure of unhusked rice paid by each family at harvest-time. This is the general custom; but in some villages he is paid in grain or money every time he shaves a beard, cuts hair, acts as a manicure, etc.

Among other village servants may be mentioned the *āchārya*, *i.e.*, the astrologer, fortune-teller, and almanac writer, who is remunerated either in money or by gifts of rice, pulses and vegetables. Similarly, the *sīmānādār* or village watchman gets four bundles (*birā*) of paddy per *bighā* as his remuneration for guarding the fields at night during the harvesting seasons. The *kayāl*, again, whose business is to weigh and measure grain, is generally paid in kind by the buyer or seller, or by both; he is frequently found at markets where large quantities of grain are sold, but not usually in the smaller villages.

Supply of labour. Regarding the supply of labour, Mr. Foley writes in his *Report on Labour in Bengal* (1906)—"Besides emigration to the Assam tea gardens, there is emigration from thānas Raipur, Khātrā, Ondā and Bānkurā at the end of November or beginning of December eastwards for crop cutting, earth work, etc., the emigrants returning at the end of June or beginning of July. The two most numerous castes are the Bauris, to be found mostly in thānas Gangājalghāti, Bānkurā and Khātrā, and the Santāls to be found mostly in Bānkurā, Raipur, Ondā and Khātrā. The remarkable thing is that, though the Bauris and Santāls are the chief coal-cutters in the Rānīganj coal fields, are numerous in five

thānas of the Bānkurā district, and are compelled to emigrate in search of employment every year, yet recruitment for the Rānīganj mines is only carried on in one thāna, the adjacent one, Gangājalghāti. One would have thought that every effort would have been made long ago to induce as many as possible of the Santāls and Bauris in Bānkurā to take to the coal mines. Recruitment has apparently, however, been confined to Gangājalghāti, and the Santāls and Bauris of the other thānas will not take to the coal fields of themselves. The thānas of Bānkurā, Ondā, Raipur and Khātrā are therefore to be recommended for coal recruiting.

"It seems rather doubtful if the emigrant labour would be found suitable for handling goods in Calcutta; but I was informed that, besides the people that leave the district at the end of November, there are others who leave at the end of February or beginning of March and return at the end of June. Since this is just the time when more labour is needed in Calcutta, it would seem quite worth while to try whether those people would make dock labourers. There can be little doubt that there is a large supply of labour in this district still to be had, but at present there is no systematic system of recruitment except for the tea gardens. Year after year the Santāls, Bauris, and other low castes migrate from the south and the west to the eastern districts, their number depending upon the state of the crops and the wages to be earned."

PRICES.

The marginal statement shows the price of food grains during the last fortnight in March during the 15 years 1891-1905. It will be seen that there has been a steady rise in the price of cereals, but the fluctuations in the price of wheat and gram are not of much importance, as they are not consumed in any quantity by the majority of the people. The rise has been general throughout the Burdwān Division, and cannot be ascribed to any local cause, but to increased demand throughout the country and improved facilities for export. The price of salt alone has fallen owing to the reduction in duty recently carried into effect. This reduction, it is said, was hailed with joy by all classes of people, but the poorest classes, who take only a small quantity of salt, were not benefited to any appreciable extent.

Years.	Common rice.	Wheat.	Gram.	Salt.
	S. CH.	S. CH.	S. CH.	S. CH.
1891-1895 .	16 10½	12 14½	15 7	10 7
1896-1900 .	15 7	11 11	13 13	9 12½
1901-1905 .	13 14	11 10	14 9½	11 14½

MATERIAL CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE.

Writing in 1863, Colonel Gastrell described the material condition of the people as follows. "The general condition of the people, as compared with the adjoining districts to the east, is one of poverty. In the jungle tracts, especially, this is apparent. In the towns and villages of the low lands they are better off, but here, even amongst the labouring classes, few show signs of much comfort, either in personal appearance or the economy of their houses. Drunkenness and immorality are rife amongst them, whereby their physical development is much impaired, the food and clothing of the women and children are stinted to allow the fathers to drink; and thus all suffer in common." The improvement which has taken place in less than half a century will be apparent from the following extract from a report written by the Collector in 1901:—"There has been, on the whole, an increase in the prosperity of the people. They evince a growing desire to provide themselves with better food, better clothing and better appliances generally. Gold and silver ornaments are more common than 10 years ago; brass utensils have usurped the place of earthen pots; and shoes, umbrellas and better articles of dress are more extensively used. New brick-built houses are springing up everywhere, and articles of food which were formerly luxuries are now in common use."

There is no doubt that the rise in the price of rice and other crops has put into the pockets of the cultivating classes an amount of ready money they never possessed before. The standard of living has risen considerably among them, and many things which were formerly accounted as luxuries are now treated as articles of ordinary and every day use. The labouring classes too have benefited from the growing demand for labour created by the expansion of the coal trade, the increase in the number of factories, and the establishment of new industries, outside the district. The only classes who do not share in this prosperity are those who have to depend entirely on small fixed salaries, especially those who work as clerks in Government and private employ. Debarred from manual labour by custom and tradition, with prices rising, and the purchasing power of the rupee declining, not to mention the increasing difficulties in the way of obtaining work, the struggle for existence in this section of the community has grown harder.

The following is a brief sketch of the material condition of the different classes of the community.

Landlords.

The landlords of Bānkurā are, on the whole, in reduced circumstances. There are only a few large estates, such as that belonging to the Mahārāj-Adhirāj Bahādur of Burdwān, who

owns about half the district, and the smaller estate of the Rājā of Pānchet in Mānbhūm. The resident zamīndārs, with few exceptions, hold but petty estates and are in reduced circumstances. Most of them are financially embarrassed, and in many cases their property has been sold in satisfaction of their debts. Their income is fixed, but the expense of maintaining their position has increased owing to the high price of food and of other articles of necessity, the greater cost of educating their children and of performing the social and religious ceremonies incidental to their position, and last, but not the least, the expenses of litigation.

Professional classes. The professional classes also cannot be said to be prosperous with the exception of those in the legal profession; for their incomes are small and fixed, they have appearances to keep up, and they do not reduce their expenditure on social performances or alter their traditional mode of living. They disdain manual labour, and as they have but little enterprise and less capital, they often find it difficult to make ends meet.

Commercial and industrial classes. The commercial and industrial classes form a small minority. There are few traders carrying on commercial transactions on a large scale, and it is reported that, owing to the extension of railway communications, the number of wholesale dealers has decreased, as shop-keepers now get their wares direct from Calcutta. The latter are said to be doing a lucrative trade owing to the growing indulgence in luxuries and other comforts. The industries of the district are not of much importance, mainly consisting of small hand industries, and many of the latter have declined for several years past owing to the competition of cheaper foreign goods. Recently, however, owing to the impetus given by the *swadeshī* movement, these industries have revived to some extent, and the industrial classes are consequently better off.

Many of the manufactures are carried on by workmen under a system of advances made by *mahājans* or capitalists, and not by the people on their own account. The *mahājans* generally advance the raw materials and a sum of money to the workmen. When the articles, for the manufacture of which the advance was given, are made and ready for delivery, the manufacturers are bound to sell them at wholesale market rates to the merchants from whom they received the advance. The *mahājan*, on receiving the goods, deducts the value of the raw materials, and the amount of money advanced, with interest; and the balance of the price is handed over to the manufacturer. This system often leaves a very small margin of profit to the actual workers.

Agriculturists. On the whole, the agricultural classes have benefited by the high prices of food grains in recent years, though owing to the increased cost of labour, the cultivator who gets his land cultivated by means of hired labour is not so well-off as the man who cultivates himself. On the whole, their state cannot be said to be one of plenty, but it is well removed from penury, and some sections are in fairly comfortable circumstances.

Labourers. The condition of the labouring classes has improved in recent years owing to the extension of the Bengal-Nāgpur Railway through the district, for it has enabled a larger number to migrate in the off season, when there is no work in the fields, and to find employment in collieries, in the fields, and in factories elsewhere. Those, who do not migrate, have benefited by this overflow, and also, to a certain extent, by the increase in the rate of wages. It is doubtful if that increase has been commensurate with the rise in the price of food; but fortunately field labourers are mostly paid in grain, and are, therefore, not affected by market prices as much as would otherwise be the case. The rise in the price of grain has also been of advantage to the class known as *krishāns*, or field labourers, who receive a fixed proportion of the produce of the land they cultivate, as that proportion remains the same, while he value is greater. Still, in spite of all this, it cannot be denied that the lot of the landless labourer is, on the whole, a hard one. His wages are small, his family is frequently large, he is generally improvident, and he is often addicted to drinking. Spending what he earns from day to day, he has very little to pawn or sell in times of distress; he gets no credit from the *mahājan;* and he is the first to succumb if the crops fail and he cannot get labour.

Indebtedness. Indebtedness is believed to be fairly general among the cultivating classes, but in the absence of details as to its nature and amount, it is scarcely possible to state that it represents any great degree of poverty. Agriculture, like other industries, is supported on credit, and the *mahājan* is as essential to the village as the ploughman. Some of the ryots' debt is owed to the shopkeeper who sells grain, or to the *mahājan* or landlord for advances to purchase food while the harvest is ripening, and such accounts are usually closed when the harvest is reaped; some is contracted, more particularly if the harvest promises to be a bumper one, for expenditure on marriages in the family; and some debts are business transactions closely connected with agriculture, *e.g.*, for the purchase of seed, plough or cattle, or for extending cultivation or making agricultural improvements.

Rates of interest. The following are reported to be current rates of interest in Bānkurā. In small loan transactions, in which the borrower pawns

articles ,such as ornaments or household vessels, of greater value than the sum borrowed, the rate of interest varies from twelve to eighteen per cent. In large transactions, when a mortgage on moveable property only is given, the interest is from eighteen to twenty-four per cent., as the security is not so easily realized in execution of a decree, owing to the facilities for removing or alienating the property pledged. But, where the lender is well secured by a mortgage on immoveable property, such as houses or land, the interest is from nine to twelve per cent. When petty agricultural advances are made to the cultivators, either upon the personal security of the borrower in a current account, or with a lien upon the crops, the interest varies from eighteen to thirty-six per cent. In the case of grain advances the usual rate of interest is one-fourth the quantity borrowed.

Methods of usury. As regards the methods of usury they have not altered since Col. Gastrell described them as follows:—"The manner in which the ryot gets into the *mahājan's* books, from which he seldom escapes again, appears to be generally as follows. Few of the cultivators can afford to save up sufficient seed from their crops to sow down their fields again, or, if able with care to do so, seldom do. Still fewer have money to purchase seed with, when the sowing season comes round. Recourse is therefore had to the *mahājan*. The *mahājan* on lending money usually takes a bond for a much larger amount than he actually pays down. Sometimes the ryot borrows in kind, and this is a favourite mode when *mahājans* or zamīndārs are lending to very poor men. In such cases the agreement generally entered into by the ryot is to repay in kind at the ensuing harvest, with from 50 to 100 or more per cent. increase on the quantity borrowed. When once a ryot has thus been reduced to borrow, he is seldom or never able to clear himself of his obligations. As a rule, the poor classes appear to think little of the future. The present, with its cares and troubles, its joys and pleasures, suffices for them; and so, when the time for payment of his loan comes, and the poor man finds himself unable to pay up principal and interest, he pays all he can, and the *mahājan* strikes the balance. He then, if he can, enters on a new loan, including the balance of the former one, and so he goes on until, body and soul, he is bound down to the inexorable money-lender."

CHAPTER VIII.

OCCUPATIONS, MANUFACTURES AND TRADE.

According to the statistics obtained at the census of 1901, altogether 60·7 per cent. of the population are supported by agriculture—a proportion considerably below the general average for Bengal. Of the total number of agriculturists, 40 per cent. are actual workers, including 5,000 rent receivers, 214,000 rent-payers and 47,000 labourers. Various industries support 15·9 per cent. of the population, of whom a little more than half are actual workers, including 16,000 fishermen and fish dealers, 10,000 cotton weavers, 9,000 rice pounders and 6,000 basket makers; goldsmiths, ironsmiths, workers in brass, potters, carpenters, silk spinners, and necklace makers are also numerous. The number dependent for their livelihood on commerce and the professions is very small, only 0·7 per cent. being supported by trade and 2·2 per cent. by the professions; of the latter 44 per cent. are actual workers, including 3,000 priests, 4,000 religious mendicants, 1,100 medical men and 700 teachers. About 87,000 persons, or nearly 8 per cent. of the population, are earth workers and general labourers, and 22,000 persons are herdsmen.

The following is a brief account of the principal manufactures and industries of the district.

Silk weaving is still a fairly prosperous industry. It is carried on at Bishnupur, Bānkurā, Rājgrām, Bīrsinghpur, Jaypur and Gopīnāthpur; but the chief centre of the industry is Bishnupur, which has a special reputation for the manufacture of prettily mbroidered silk scarves, plain and flowered *sāris* or dress pieces for vomen, and a maroon coloured cloth called *dhupchhāyā*. Though he fabrics are not equal to the Berhampore silk in fineness and venness of texture, they are in considerable demand in the district, nd also outside it. Only a portion of the raw material used in he looms is produced locally, the balance being imported. But lk-worms are reared and silk is spun in the villages of Dhāndā, unīsol, Keshabpur, Chingānī, Tilaghāgrī, Simlāpāl, Pakhurdabā, āthardabā and Barakhuliā. The silk of the mulberry cocoons un into thread by the country method of reeling is called *khāmru*. e following is a brief account of the process of manufacture.

The first process that the native reeled silk undergoes in the hands of the weavers consists of winding silk of different degrees of fineness on different *lātais* or spindles. The second process is that of bleaching, the silk being boiled for an hour in water mixed with the ashes of *sāl* leaves, after which it is washed and dried, and again rolled on a *lātai*. A sort of gum, prepared by boiling parched paddy in water, is now applied, and the warp and woof are prepared, the former consisting of two strands and the latter of four strands of thread. The art of dyeing silk with a true black dye seems to be known, the dye being obtained from *harītakī*, filings, and a small proportion of ferrous sulphate. A blue dye is made of indigo, *harītakī*, soap, and a few other ingredients. A red dye is obtained from lac, which is finely powdered and boiled with tamarind, alum and *khār*, *i.e.*, crude sodium carbonate. An orange colour, called *jarad*, is made of *kamalā* powder, *khār* and alum.

The quantity of pure silk manfactured is comparatively small, but it is reported that there is a good demand for the products of the looms of Bishnupur. The articles manufactured are *phulām sārīs*, or cloths for females with patterns of flowers on them, which are sold at Rs. 10 to Rs. 20 each; *dhutis* or cloths for males, sold at Rs. 10 to 12 each; *thāns*, or dress pieces, sold at Re. 1-8 to Re. 1-12 per yard; scarves or comforters sold at Re. 1-8 to Re. 1-12 each; handkerchiefs sold at 12 annas each; and silk checks sold at Re. 1-8 per yard. The flowered *sārīs* of Bishnupur are in special request, and are exported to other districts.

Tusser silk weaving.

The fabrics mostly woven, however, consist of tusser silk; and the local *ketes* or coarse cloths, made out of thread spun from pierced cocoons (answering to *matkā* cloths), are well known. These stuffs are not only durable but cheap, a piece of *kete* sufficient for a complete suit of clothes costing only Rs. 4 or Rs. 5. The following is a brief account of the method of manufacture.

The eggs of the silk-worm are gathered and put on the leaves of *āsan*, *sāl*, and *sidā* trees in the jungle. In due time the cocoons are formed, and are gathered by cutting the small branches from which they are suspended. The cocoons are sold at Rs. 5 to Rs. 9 a *kāhan*, *i.e.*, a set of 1280, and are purchased wholesale by substantial merchants, who retail them to the weavers. When they have passed into the hands of the weavers, the cocoons are first boiled in water, mixed with wood ashes, and are next washed and cooled. Five cocoons are then taken at a time, and the silk from them is wound by a woman on a *lātai*.

The silk thus obtained is gummed and otherwise prepared for weaving as in the case of domesticated silk. It is generally coloured violet and red with aniline dyes, but sometimes is dyed yellow by means of turmeric and *kamalā* powder. The various kinds of tusser fabrics manufactured in this district and their prices are as follows:—*sārīs*, sold at Rs. 3 to Rs 8; *dhutis*, sold at Rs. 2 to Rs. 5; *thāns* or long pieces for making dresses, sold at 12 annas to Re. 1 per yard. The weavers also produce a species of mixed cotton and tusser, which is sold at 8 annas to 10 annas per yard.

The principal centres of the tusser silk industry are Gopīnāthpur, Bānkurā, Rājgrām, Sonāmukhī, Bishnupur and Rājhāt-Bīrsinghpur, where there are nearly 3,000 families of weavers, who weave tusser in preference to cotton, if they get a supply of cocoons; but, for want of cocoons, only about a fifth of the number are habitually employed in tusser weaving. Rājgrām is a recognized mart for tusser cocoons; and not only local, but also Singhbhūm cocoons, find their way into the hands of the *mahājans* of this village. The weavers are men of the Tānti caste, who generally prepare the silk themselves from the cocoons. The greater portion of the tusser silk produced is sold locally, but brokers come annually from other districts, and buy a considerable quantity of their fabrics from the weavers.

Regarding the prospects of the industry, Mr. N. G. Mukerji remarks in his monograph on *The Silk Fabrics of Bengal* (1903): "In Bānkurā the silk weaving industry still holds its own, though cocoon rearing has dwindled down into insignificance. The silkworm epidemics have been the principal cause of the great contraction of the industry within a very few years both in Midnapore and in Bānkurā; and as both districts still contain large numbers of people who depended at one time on sericulture, but who have now taken to other pursuits, the resuscitation of the silk industry in these two districts, if taken in hand within a few years, is not such a difficult matter to accomplish." This hope appears likely to be fulfilled.

In a *Report on the State of the Tusser Silk Industry in Bengal and the Central Provinces*, published in 1905, Mr. N. G. Mukerji states:—"The tusser weaving industry of Bānkurā seems to be more famous than of any other place I have yet visited. The *sārīs* and *dhutis* of Sonāmukhī and Bishnupur are very famous; even in Dacca and Mymensingh they are prized. At Sonāmukhī there are about a thousand families of tusser-weavers; at Bishnupur there are about 500 to 700 families of tusser and silk weavers; at Gopīnāthpur and Bānkūra about 400 families; at Rājgrām

about 200 families, and at Rājhāt-Bīrsinghpur about 400 families. These represent at least 10,000 individuals working or capable of working in tusser. When they cannot get enough cocoons, they take to cotton weaving, but they prefer turning out tusser. The weaving industry of Bishnupur seems to be very extensive. There are more than 500 families of weavers in the town, and they weave either silk or tusser, more silk now than tusser. Silk weaving is improving, while tusser weaving is going down. The weavers say it costs them now almost as much turning out a tusser *sārī* as a silk *sārī*, and people prefer a silk *sārī*."

The quantity of cocoons reared locally is, however, insufficient to meet the demand of the weavers, and large numbers are imported from Midnapore and Chotā Nāgpur. The cocoon rearing industry is, in fact, no longer of importance, though some rearing is carried on within 8 miles of Bānkūrā, the cocoons being brought to the market at Rājgrām, and also in the Khātrā thāna, the cocoons being exported to Chaibāsā.*

Cotton and wool weaving. The cotton weaving industry is now of little importance owing to the imports of cheaper machine-made cloth. Coarse cotton cloth is still made by hand looms in most parts of the district, but is gradually being driven out of the market. The *swadeshī* movement is reported to have done little to arrest this tendency in Bānkurā, where the inclination of the people to use country-made clothes is not pronounced, and the sale of Manchester goods has consequently not decreased. Blankets are woven by small colonies of Bheriāls (the shepherd caste) at Lokpur and Kendudī on the outskirts of Bānkurā town. It is reported that these shepherds were originally immigrants from Gayā, but have now cut off all connection with their native district and made Bānkurā their permanent home.

Lac industry. The manufacture of lac was formerly carried on extensively, but is on the decline owing to the competition of cheap foreign lac. The number of factories accordingly decreased from 35 in 1901 to 24 in 1905, but rose again to 26 in 1906, when the outturn was 4,160 maunds. The chief centre of the industry is Sonāmukhī.

The raw lac is a resinous incrustation, which is produced round the bodies of colonies of the lac insect, after it has fastened on the twigs of certain trees, such as the *palās* (*Butea frondosa*), *kusum* (*Schleichera trijuga*), *sāl* (*Shorea robusta*) and *āsan* (*Terminalia tomentosa*). This insect lives on vegetable sap, which

* This account of the silk industry of Bānkurā has been compiled from Mr. N. G. Mukerji's monograph on *The Silk Fabrics of Bengal* (1903) and *Report on the State of the Tusser Silk Industry in Bengal and the Central Provinces* (1905).

it sucks up by means of a proboscis from the succulent tissues of these trees. When the larvæ escape from the dead bodies of the females, they crawl about in search of fresh sappy twigs; and at the time of swarming the twigs of the trees infested by them will often be seen to assume a reddish colour, owing to the countless masses of minute larvæ moving all over them. Those that survive penetrate the twigs and become permanently fixed there, till they emerge as insects, proceeding in the process of digestion to transform the sap sucked up by their proboscis, and to exude from their bodies a resinous incrustation, with which they ultimately become incrusted. The twigs continue to be incrusted until the crop is collected in May to June and October to November, or just before the swarming seasons.

The incrusted twigs are collected and sold to dealers under the name of "stick-lac." These are dried, broken up and crushed, and the lac is pounded and washed under water. The washings, when boiled down and concentrated, become "lac-dye," and the washed lac is known as "seed-lac." The lac is now placed in long shallow cloth bags, and these are twisted in front of fires till the lac melts and is squeezed through the texture of the bags. When sufficiently cooked, it is spread out on hot tubes until it assumes the form of large thin sheets. These are next taken up by skilled operators, who stand in front of the fires, and stretch the sheets till they become as thin as paper, forming the "shellac" of commerce.

Collieries. There are three collieries in the northern extremity of the district adjoining the Asansol subdivision of the Burdwān district, coal being found only in a narrow strip along the Dāmodar. Of these only two are worked regularly, viz., Kālikāpur, which was opened in 1876, and Jamunākānāli, opened in 1906; the third, the Bānskurī colliery, opened in 1897, worked only for six months in 1906, and was then closed. Both the working mines have inclines, and machinery is not used for raising the coal, which is brought to the surface by the primitive means of baskets carried on the heads of the labourers. The mines are small, and the daily average number of labourers employed in 1906 was only 45 below ground and 45 above ground. The labourers are local men, generally belonging to the Bauri, Santāl and other low castes, and their average daily earnings are about 4 annas each, or about the same as those of agricultural labourers. The coal is consumed locally for burning bricks, etc., and is reported to be of inferior quality. The output is declining steadily, owing to the fact that a large proportion of the coal needed for local consumption is now brought by rail from

larger mines outside the district; the result being that the average annual output decreased from 10,000 tons in the five years ending in 1901 to 9,000 tons in the quinquennium ending in 1905.

Other minerals.

Laterite is found nearly all over the district, and is quarried to a large extent for road metalling, and to a small extent for building purposes. Few rocks present greater advantages from its peculiar character. It is easy to cut and shape when first dug, and it becomes hard and tough after exposure to the air, while it seems to be affected very little by the weather. Indeed, in many of the sculptured stones of some of the oldest temples in the district, the chisel marks are as fresh and sharp as when they were first built. It is perhaps not so strong, nor so capable of resisting great pressure and bearing great weights, as some of the sandstones or the more compact kinds of gneiss; but it certainly possesses amply sufficient strength for all ordinary purposes. It has been largely used in the old temples, and the elaborate specimens of carving and ornament in some of these shew that the nodular structure and irregular surface of the laterite do not prevent its effective use for such purposes of ordinary ornamentation as mouldings, etc. Slabs of the rock, from 4 to 5 feet long, are easily procurable. They are quarried in a rude but effective way; a groove is cut with a rudely pointed pick round the slab, another is made underneath, and then a few wedges driven in split off the block. The looser and more gravelly forms of laterite are used for road-metal, for which purpose they are admirably adapted.

Large quantities of stone are also available in the hills, and quarrying was formerly carried on at the Susuniā hill. White lithomarge is obtained under the laterite at a point about 12 miles north-east of Bānkurā, and mica is found in some parts of the Khātrā and Raipur thānas, but its quality is so poor that it cannot be worked profitably. Kaolin is found in most parts of the district; it is used locally for whitewashing houses, and is also exported to Rānīganj for the pottery works there. Gold is reported to occur in small quantities in the sands of the Dhalkishor and Kāsai rivers, and is believed to exist in *pargana* Ambikānagar in an estate belonging to the Tagore family. Some prospecting work has been carried on, but the results were not satisfactory.

Brass.

Brass and bell-metal utensils are made, on a fairly large scale, at Bānkurā, Bishnupur and Patrasāyar. Bānkurā is said to be famous for its large water-vessels, a *lotā* with a spout being a speciality of the town; and handsome rice bowls made of wood bound with brass, similar to those known as "Surī

bowls," are also turned out. The brass utensils manufactured in this district are much prized in native households elsewhere in Bengal, and considerable quantities are exported to Calcutta and other parts of the country.

Indigo. No account of the manufactures of the district would be complete without a mention of the indigo industry, which was formerly of considerable importance. Writing in 1863, Colonel Gastrell said that the principal indigo concerns were those of Mr. J. Erskine in the north and of Dr. Cheek in the south of the district. The headquarters of the former was at Sonāmukhī, and there were out-factories at Asuriā, Desuriā, Nārāyanpur, Rāmpur, Tāsuli, Krishnanagar and Gopālpur. The latter, with headquarters at Bānkurā, had factories at Sāntor, Mākrā, Ondā, Bishnupur, Amdāngrā, Champātolā, Jaypur, Kotalpur, Khatnagar, Gopālnagar, Patrasāyar, Jāmurā, Barā and Kānkiliā. A reference to old maps shows that there were also factories at Sānturi and Dīghā near Bānkurā on the east, at Kurpā to the south on the Tāldāngra road, at Rol, and at several places along the banks of the Dhalkishor. The industry has now completely died out.

Other industries. There are two tobacco manufactories in the town of Bishnupur, from which a scented tobacco is exported to almost every part of Bengal. The process of preparation is kept a trade secret, and the price varies from Rs. 5 to Rs. 200 per maund. Wood-carving is carried on in a small way at Bānkurā and Bishnupur, household requisites and sporting materials being manufactured at the latter place. A new business in fretwork and perforated carving in wood and metal has also been started at Bānkurā. Molasses are manufactured by the cultivators all over the district, but the industry is on the decline. Penknives, razors and scissors of good quality are made at Sāshpur in the Indās thāna, and conch-shell ornaments at Bānkurā, Bishnupur and Patrasāyar.

TRADE. Rice, brass and bell-metal ware, silk stuffs, hides, horns, lime and lac are the chief articles of export, while the imports are coal, salt, spices, cotton twist, cotton yarn and European piece-goods. A small part of the trade passes through the Rānīganj and Pānāgarh stations on the East Indian Railway, but most of it is conveyed by the Midnapore-Jherriā extension of the Bengal-Nāgpur Railway, which passes through the district. The construction of the latter line has increased the volume of trade, but has not yet afforded special facilities of export and import to all the trade centres. Consequently, wheeled traffic still continues to a considerable extent; but the quantity of import or export by carts cannot be ascertained. The trade of the

district is mostly carried on by means of permanent markets and also through the medium of *hāts* and fairs.

There is no uniformity in the system of weights and measures recognized in the district. There are no less than three seers of different weights in the town of Bānkurā alone, viz., a seer of 60, 62 and 80 *tolās*. The first is used exclusively by dealers in brass utensils, the second by retail dealers for weighing salt, spices, fish, vegetables, etc., while the third is used by wholesale dealers for all kinds of commodities. In other parts of the district the seer of 60 *tolās* is used by grocers and other traders, whether wholesale or retail; that of 62 *tolās* is common in the Bishnupur subdivision and in the south-west of the headquarters subdivision for all kinds of commodities; and a seer of 64 *tolās* is employed in the Chhātnā outpost for weighing all goods except rice and oil. In some parts of Bishnupur and Chhātnā, again, a seer of 72 *tolās* is used by traders in silk, rice and oil, while the standard seer of 80 *tolās* is used for all kinds of goods in Kotalpur, Indās, Sāltorā and Gangājalghāti. Wholesale dealers in brass and bell-metal also use weights known as *bisā* and *pal* in parts of the Kotalpur thāna, a *pal* being equivalent to 8½ *tolās*, while the *bisā* contains 20 *pals* or 170 *tolās*. For measures of capacity the standard is the *pai*, the capacity of which differs very greatly in different places, varying from 74 to 105 *tolās*. For measures of length the English yard and foot are in common use, while the cubit (*hāth* or *hāthi*) of 18 inches is generally used for measuring cloth. Weights and measures.

The old land measure in Bānkurā was as follows :—1 *kānī*=12 *chhatāks* Bengal standard measure, or 1 pole 22 yards 5 feet; 40 *kānī*=1 *uān* 3 *kāthā*, or 7 poles 28 yards 2 feet; 50 *uāns*=1 *ārhī* 7½ *bighās*, or 2 acres 2 roods 18 poles 19 yards 8 feet; 4 *ārhīs*=1 *drun*=30 *bighās*, or 10 acres 1 rood 34 poles 19 yards 7 feet. The Bengal standard *bighā*, which was introduced with the revenue survey operations, is equal to 1,600 square yards, and is divided thus :—20 *gandās*=1 *chhatāk*, or 5 square yards; 16 *chhatāks*=1 *kāthā*, or 80 square yards; 20 *kāthās*=1 *bighā*, or 1,600 square yards. There is another division of the standard *bighā*, as follows :—16 *gandās*=1 *biswānsī*, or 4 square yards; 20 *biswānsīs*=1 *biswā* or 80 square yards; 20 *biswās* =1 *bighā*, or 1,600 square yards.

CHAPTER IX.

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION.

DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS.

UNTIL the year 1902 there was no railway in the district, and the easiest way of reaching it was to travel by rail to Rānīganj and thence by road. The journey was not only expensive, but tedious. First, the Dāmodar had to be crossed—no easy matter in the rains, with water rushing down in flood, or at other seasons of the year in consequence of the numerous sandbanks. Having arrived on the other side of the river, a weary journey in ramshackle carts drawn by feeble ponies awaited the traveller before he could reach the town of Bānkurā. The difficulties of the journey may be realized from the experience of Sir W. W. Hunter when travelling from Surī to Midnapore in 1866. "The journey," writes Mr. Skrine, in the *Life of Sir William Wilson Hunter*, "was fraught with fatigue and peril, and its incidents contrast strangely with the prosaic features of railway travel now universal throughout India. The Hunters journeyed by road in their own victoria drawn by a pair, their third horse being sent forward at alternate stages. August is the month least suited of the twelve for a flitting, for it is a time of suffocating heat varied by downpours, of which those who have never visited the tropics can form no conception. On arriving at the bank of the river Dāmodar the luckless travellers found it a raging torrent. The only means of transit was a crazy ferry-boat, into which was crammed the victoria flanked by the horses on either side. Each was firmly held by the head, while its master stood behind to manipulate a cunning apparatus of rope, so devised that on either animal showing signs of fractiousness he would at once be forced overboard. Then a start was made to cross the Dāmodar at 8 A.M., but it was past ten at night ere the boat was able to make a creek on the opposite bank. The horses were lifted through the sea of mud left by the receding waters by the help of bamboo leverage, and the family, now fairly worn out, made their way to the embanked high road and started for the rest house. The carriage had not proceeded far ere the driver saw a broad black line bisecting the road immediately in front. This proved to be a chasm made by the floods. There was nothing for it but to unhitch the horses, let the carriage down the bank, and

drag it painfully to the summit of the road on the other side of the gap."*

The railway now runs through the district from east to west, but internal communication is rendered difficult by the many unbridged rivers which intersect the district. Beds of sand in the dry weather, with a narrow fordable stream in the centre, they swell into torrents in the rains, and traffic is frequently impeded for three or four days at a time. In the cold and hot weather again they form a serious obstacle to traffic owing to the wide stretches of sand in their dried-up beds; and it is a pitiable sight to see the frantic struggles of the bullocks to drag their carts across them. Where there is a narrow unbridged nullah to cross, the difficulty is equally great, for the carter must either unload, and convey the cart and its load over separately, or let cart, bullocks and the load go full swing into the nullah, and take their chance of either being upset at the bottom or of getting sufficient impetus to run up the other side.

Except for the deficiency of bridges, however, the roads of the district are, on the whole, excellent, and practically every part is well-provided with them except the south-west corner round Raipur. The facilities for road-making are naturally good, the lateritic soil affording an inexhaustible supply of metal; and besides the main roads, there are numerous cart roads and tracks intersecting the country in all directions, and rendering the transit of light loads by carts and pack-bullocks easy.

RAILWAYS. The only railway in the district is a branch of the Bengal-Nāgpur Railway, known as the Midnapore-Jherriā extension or the Kharagpur-Asansol branch. Its length within the district is about 50 miles, and there are 7 stations, viz., Piārdobā, Bishnupur, Rāmsāgar, Ondāgrām, Bānkurā, Chhātnā, and Jhāntīpāhāri. The line crosses the Birai river near Bishnupur and the Dhalkishor a few miles east of Bānkurā, the bridge over the river last named being a fine piece of engineering work. There is also a proposal to construct a chord line from Howrah to Bānkurā, which would join this railway at Bishnupur. The principal object of this connection would be to supply Calcutta with an alternative route from the United Provinces and Northern India to that afforded by the East Indian Railway; its immediate effect, so far as this district is concerned, would be to bring it into direct communication with Calcutta.

ROADS. The Public Works Department maintains altogether $58\frac{1}{2}$ miles of roads in the district, of which $55\frac{1}{2}$ miles are metalled and 3

* F. H. Skrine, *Life of Sir William Wilson Hunter*, (1901) p. 113.

miles are unmetalled; while the District Board maintains 61 miles of metalled and 541 miles of unmetalled roads, besides a number of village roads (all unmetalled) with an aggregate length of 105 miles. The following is a brief account of the principal roads of the district.

Rānīganj-Midnapore road. The only road in the district maintained from Provincial funds is the Rānīganj-Midnapore road, of which 58½ miles lie within the district; it is at present kept up by the District Board for the Public Works Department. Starting from the Dāmodar river, it passes southwards through Mejiā and Gangājalghāti to the town of Bānkurā. Thence it runs to the south-east, parallel with the railway, through Ondā and Bishnupur, entering the Midnapore district a short distance to the south of the Piārdobā railway station. Near Bishnupur there is a short loop road, which branches off at the Birai river, and passing to the west of the town of Bishnupur, rejoins the main road about a mile from the town. Of the 58½ miles lying within the district, all but 3 miles are metalled. Most of the streams over which it passes have been bridged; but there are no bridges over the Gandheswarī and Dhalkisor near Bānkurā or over the Birai near Bishnupur. The Dāmodar is also unbridged, and consequently communication with Rānīganj is difficult, especially during the rains, the river being often impassable for days together when it is in high flood.

District Board roads. The most important roads maintained by the District Board radiate from Bānkurā and Bishnupur. To the west of Bānkurā is a road 17 miles long, known as the Bānkurā-Raghunāthpur road, which leads to Bāmunshāsan, and establishes communication with Raghunāthpur in Mānbhūm. Two important roads branch off from this road, one running from Dalpur to Mohesnā (9 miles) on the south-west and thence to Puruliā, while another strikes north from Chhātnā to Susuniā and thence through Kustholiā to Mejiā (21 miles). On the south of Bānkurā there are two main roads, one, the Bānkurā-Khātrā road, running south-west through Indpur (6 miles) to Khātrā, 21½ miles from Bānkurā; while the other, the Bānkurā-Raipur road, goes south-east to Tāldāngrā (15½ miles) and thence *viâ* Simlāpāl (8½ miles) to Raipur, which is situated 36½ miles from Bānkurā. To the north-east a long road, known as the Bānkurā-Burdwān road, leads from Bānkurā through Beliatore (12½ miles) to Sonāmukhī (25 miles) and thence through Krishnanagar to Burdwān; its length within the district is 41½ miles. This used to form part of the direct route between Bānkurā and Calcutta, a total distance of 85½ miles.

From Bishnupur two important District Board roads branch off. The first, known as the Bishnupur-Pānāgarh road, runs due north through Sonāmukhī to Rāngāmetiā on the Dāmodar river and thence to Pānāgarh, its length in the district being 25 miles. The second, known as the Bishnupur-Howrah road, runs through Jaypur and Mirzāpur to Kotalpur and thence into the Howrah district, 23 miles lying within this district; from Kotalpur a road branches off to Indās and thence to Rol, ultimately joining the Bānkurā-Burdwān road a little distance beyond the north-eastern boundary. The only other roads calling for separate notice are those in the north-west of the district, viz., a road from Gangājalghāti to Sāltorā, 13½ miles long, which passes through Kustholiā, where it crosses the Chhātnā-Mejiā road, and a road from Mejiā *viâ* Sāltorā to Marulu (14½ miles), which is part of the Rānīganj-Puruliā road.

Military Grand Trunk Road.

In concluding this account of the roads of Bānkurā, mention may be made of the old Military Grand Trunk Road from Calcutta to the north-west. It enters Bānkurā from Burdwān, and traversing the southern half of the district, runs in a north-westerly direction south of and nearly parallel to the Dhalkishor, and enters the Mānbhūm district near the village of Raghunāthpur, passing on its way through Kotalpur, Bishnupur, Ondā, Bānkurā, and Chhātnā. A reference to the map will show that this road is now divided into three sections, viz., part of the Bishnupur-Howrah road, part of the Rānīganj-Midnapore road and part of the Bānkurā-Raghunāthpur road. Formerly, the section from Bānkurā to Bishnupur was much used by pilgrims on their way to the great temple of Jagannāth at Purī, but most of the passenger traffic, as well as part of the cart traffic, has now been absorbed by the railway.

Not far from the road at Rāmsāgar, a few miles west of Bishnupur, and at Sālghātā, a short distance from Ondā, some lofty towers may still be seen. These are interesting relics of a scheme entertained by the Indian Government early in the nineteenth century (1820-30) for the construction of a series of towers, 100 feet high and at intervals of 8 miles, for semaphore signalling all the way from Calcutta to Bombay. In those days the word 'telegraph' was applied to the method of signalling by means of a semaphore, and we therefore find these towers marked on old maps as telegraph stations.

Conveyances.

The conveyances in common use consist of bullock carts, pack-bullocks and *pālkis*, which call for no special description. One conveyance is, however, peculiar, viz., the ordinary tumtum or dogcart with bamboo shafts, the peculiarity being that, instead of

a horse, there are one or two men in the shafts, who draw the vehicle along by pushing against a rope tied between them.

WATER COMMUNICATIONS. The only navigable rivers in the district are the Dāmodar and Kāsai, but there is practically no river-borne traffic except timber, which is floated down the Dāmodar. During the rains numbers of logs are fastened together by ropes to form rafts known locally as *mārs*, with three or four men to steer them. The rafts are sometimes 50 to 60 yards long, and generally ten or twelve are launched together from the timber-yielding tracts higher up the river. The trade, however, is declining on account of the denudation of the forests towards the sources of the Dāmodar.

Ferries and boats. The District Board maintains 18 ferries, of which the most important is that across the Dāmodar at Rāngāmetiā. Most of the ferries ply only during the rains when the rivers and streams are in flood, the passengers and goods being transported in ordinary country boats and dug-outs. Floats resting on inverted earthen pots, and rafts made of sola pith, are used for crossing the smaller streams, and the latter are also used by fishermen to stand on when throwing their nets.

POSTAL COMMUNICATIONS. There are altogether 400 miles of postal communication in the district and 67 post offices, *i.e.*, one post office for every 39 square miles. The number of postal articles delivered in 1906-07 was 1,951,482, including letters, postcards, packets, newspapers, and parcels; while the value of money orders paid was Rs. 9,39,429 and of those issued Rs. 6,45,251. The number of Savings Bank deposits in the same year was 6,345, the amount deposited being Rs. 2,53,760. There are 4 postal-telegraph offices, from which 5,998 messages were issued in the same year; these offices are situated at Bānkurā, Bishnupur, Gangājalghāti and Sonāmukhi.

CHAPTER X.

LAND REVENUE ADMINISTRATION.

BEFORE British rule was established, the whole of the district, as now constituted, with the exception of thānas Raipur and Khātrā and of the western portion of the Bānkurā thāna now included in the Chhātnā outpost, was comprised within the territory of the Rājā of Bishnupur, the descendant of a long line of independent or tributary chiefs. On the cession of Bānkurā, the Rājā was reduced to the position of an ordinary land-holder. In 1788 a settlement of his estate was made with the then Rājā, Chaitanya Singh, the land revenue payable being fixed at Rs. 3,86,708: a copy of the *kabuliyat* signed by Mr. (afterwards Sir) Arthur Hesilrige, dated Indās, the 4th August, 1788, is still preserved in the Collectorate at Bānkurā with an *ekrārnāmā* signed in the Nāgri character by the Rājā. At the decennial settlement Chaitanya Singh engaged to pay 4 lakhs of rupees annually as land revenue; but this sum he was unable to pay, for his estate was impoverished by the famine of 1770, by the lawless state of the country, which had for many years past been overrun by banditti, and by costly litigation with a rival claimant. The result was that, soon after executing the agreement, the Rājā failed to meet his engagements; and in default of payment of revenue, the Bishnupur *pargana* was split up into smaller estates, which were either sold or settled under separate engagements with the subordinate *tālukdārs* already in possession. REVENUE HISTORY.

In this way 12 separate estates were formed, viz., in 1791, Bārahazāri now included in the Gangājalghāti thāna, Karisundā in Indās and Kotalpur, Barsiāli and Hutbalsi in Indās, Baytāl, Hutdesrā and Kotalpur in Kotalpur, and Paruliā in Sonāmukhī; in 1798 Jāmtārā in Ondā and the estate known as the Jungle Mahāl; and in 1800 Kuchiākol and Pānchāl in the Bishnupur thāna. The following portions of estates were also separated and settled with *tālukdārs* in 1791, viz., Māliārā in the Gangājalghāti thāna, and Shāhārjorā and Kismat Shāhārjorā in Barjorā. Among these estates the Jungle Mahāl calls for special mention.

Large portions of the old estate of Bishnupur were under jungle, and the timber, firewood, honey, wax, etc., which they yielded, formed a valuable source of revenue. The right of collecting these jungle products was farmed out by the Rājā, and the revenue he obtained thereby was called the Jungle Mahāl, and had nothing to do with arable land. But afterwards, when it was formed into a separate estate, the name of Jungle Mahāl was given to the whole area from which jungle products were collected, some part of which was cleared and cultivated, while the rest remained covered by jungle.

Even after these portions of the estate had been detached and sold, the Rājā was unable to pay the assessed revenue. Consequently the portion of his estate which still remained was eventually put up to auction in August 1806 in satisfaction of arrears of land revenue. At that time, no individual would bid above Rs. 1,50,000, and Government accordingly became the purchaser for that sum. On the 12th November in the same year it was again put up for sale by Government, and purchased for Rs. 2,15,000 by the Mahārājā of Burdwān, whose property it still is.

Though the revenue-paying property had thus been disposed of, the Rāj family retained some properties consisting of (1) *bābuān* lands, which had been granted rent-free by Rājā Chaitanya Singh or his predecessors to relations, and (2) lands granted rent-free for the maintenance of idols. A considerable area had been assigned for the latter purpose, and even after the estate of Bishnupur had been sold off in 1806, these assignments held good, the Rāj family remaining in possession as *sebaits*. Altogether 168 idols are, it is reported, still maintained on the estate, among which may be mentioned Madan Mohan, Rādhā Syām, Ananta Deva and Mrinmayī at Bishnupur, Syām Chānd at Rādhāmohanpur, Gokul Chānd at Gokulnagar, Siva at Ekteswar, Rāmkrishnajī at Sābrākon, and Brindāban Chandra at Bīrsinghā. As regards the *bābuān* lands, *i.e.*, lands held rent-free by relations of the Bishnupur Rājās, Sir Charles Blunt, who was appointed Commissioner of Bishnupur in December 1801 and held charge of the office until it was abolished in 1805, proposed the resumption by the Rāj family of rent-free lands in the *pargana* in April 1803. This proposal was sanctioned, and the *bābuān* lands were resumed on behalf of the Rājā. There are still a number of revenue-free estates standing in the name of members of the family, besides a few small revenue-paying estates, which were originally revenue-free properties, but were subsequently resumed as invalid *lākhirāj* holdings and settled with the Rājā.

Parganas.

The above account will show the manner in which *pargana* Bishnupur was disposed of; and it will be sufficient to add that the Chhātnā outpost, coinciding with *pargana* Chhātnā, and the thānas of Raipur and Khātrā, comprising *parganas* Ambikānagar, Bhālāidihā, Phulkusmā, Raipur, Simlāpāl, Syāmsundarpur and Supur were subsequently received on transfer from the Mānbhūm district. Besides these *parganas*, there is another *pargana* called Mahiswarā, which lies within the geographical limits of this district, but is borne on the revenue roll of Mānbhūm. The statement in the margin shows the different *parganas*, their area, and the thānas or outposts within which they are situated.

Pargana.	Area in acres.	Thāna or outpost.
Ambikānagar ...	97,017	Khātrā.
Bārahazāri ...	168,265	Bānkurā, Ondā, Gangājalghāti, Bishnupur, Sonāmukhī, Kotalpur and Indās.
Bhālāidihā ...	26,266	Simlāpāl.
Bishnupur ...	674,421	Bānkurā, Ondā, Gangājalghāti, Bishnupur, Sonāmukhī, Kotalpur and Indās.
Chhātnā ...	167,721	Bānkurā
Mahiswarā ...	132,723	Gangājalghāti.
Māliārā ...	3,477	
Phulkusmā ...	16,568	Raipur.
Raipur ...	86,896	
Shābārjorā ...	20,834	Gangājalghāti.
Simlāpāl ...	50,158	Simlāpāl.
Supur ...	122,599	Khātrā.
Syāmsundarpur	30,028	Raipur.

Ghātwāli lands.

The most important event in the subsequent revenue history of the district has been the settlement of the lands held by *ghātwāls*. The *ghātwāls* appear to have been originally a *quasi*-military body of men employed by the Rājās of Bishnupur to defend the country against the incursions of the Marāthās and other invaders, and generally to maintain peace within their borders. As regards the *ghāts* for which they were responsible, it may be explained that, though the word itself denotes a pass of some kind, their duties were not confined to the protection of passes through the hills. Some *ghāts*, it is true, were hill-passes in the strict sense of the term, but others merely embraced a section of an ordinary road, and others again nothing but areas of open country, which might contain one or more villages and might not be traversed by any road at all. In return for their services the *ghātwāls* had assignments of land granted to them subject to the payment of a quit-rent called *panchak*, and such assignments constituted the *ghātwāli* tenures.

These tenures were of three kinds, viz., (1) *sarkāri panchaki*, *i.e.*, those in which the *panchak* or quit-rent was realized by

Government direct, (2) *zamīndāri panchakī*, or those in which the quit-rents were amalgamated with the land revenue of a parent estate and realized through the zamīndārs, and (3) *be-panchakī*, or those in which no quit-rent of any kind was realized. The tenures of the third class call for no explanation, but an account of the origin of the first two classes may be given. The *zamīndāri panchakī* lands consisted of lands forming portions of the old Bishnupur estate sold for arrears of revenue between 1791 and 1802, for which the *panchak* or quit-rent was paid to Government through the zamīndār. The *sarkārī panchakī* lands consisted of *ghātwāli* tenures belonging to 43 *ghāts* and comprised the greater portion of the thānas of Bānkurā, Ondā and Bishnupur. At the close of the 18th century, the Rājā of Bishnupur found that he had no control over the *ghātwāls*, who refused to pay the *panchak* due from them. He, therefore, agreed to make over these *ghāts* to Government, on condition that he was given an abatement of revenue equal to the amount of *panchak* payable to him by the *ghātwāls*. This arrangement was made by Sir Charles Blunt, Commissioner of Bishnupur, in 1802; and it was agreed that if Government should ever dispense with the services of the *ghātwāls*, the lands should be re-annexed to the zamīndāri (*i.e.*, of Bishnupur or the zamīndāri to which they then appertained or in the ambit of which they were included when that zamīndāri was settled). By the sale of the Bishnupur estates in 1806 the Mahārājā of Burdwān succeeded to the rights of the Rājā of Bishnupur, but the lands have continued to be known as *sarkārī panchakī*, as the *panchak* or quit-rent has been realized by Government since 1802.

The original area of the lands held by *ghātwāls* between 1791 and 1802 is not known, and the first information we have is regarding the *sarkārī panchakī* lands separated in 1802, which, according to Sir Charles Blunt, had an area of 35,282 *bighās* and half a *mauzā*. This area, however, was not ascertained by measurement, but was based on the assertions of the *ghātwāls* themselves. From 1805 yearly lists of the *ghātwāli* lands called *ism-navisi* or *māthwāri* were compiled from the statements of the *ghātwāls*, but no reliance can be placed on those lists; and it is not till the revenue survey of 1854-56 that we have any clear record of the area in the possession of *ghātwāls*. According to this survey, the area of the *sarkārī panchakī* lands held by *ghātwāls* was 136,536 *bighās*, of the *zamīndāri panchakī* lands 130,358 *bighās*, and of the *be-panchakī* lands 2,971 *bighās*, making a total of 269,865 *bighās* of *ghātwāli* lands belonging to the old Bishnupur estate. Subsequently a survey (made between 1879

and 1887) was undertaken to determine precisely the area of the *ghātwāli* land; and it is reported that they comprise altogether 520,000 *bighās* (*i.e.*, about 170,000 acres), *sarkārī panchakī* and *be-panchakī* lands accounting for 170,000 *bighās* and *zamīndāri panchkī* lands for 350,000 *bighās*. The number of *sarkārī panchakī ghāts* is 43, of *be-panchakī ghāts* 9, and of *zamīndāri panchakī ghāts* 218, making a total of 270; and the *panchak* realized was Rs. 10,800, viz., Rs. 5,000 for the *sarkārī panchakī* lands and Rs. 5,800 for the *zamīndāri panchakī* lands.

Nominally, the *ghātwāls* constituted a body of rural police, who bore the generic name of *ghātwāl*, but were divided, according to their special functions or to the tenures they held, into several classes, such as *sardār ghātwāl*, *sadiāl*, *digār* and *tābedār*. The responsibility of keeping the roads open and of protecting travellers from robbery rested with the *ghātwāls* generally; but the man at their head was called *sardār*, the man next in rank and immediately subordinate to him was the *sadiāl*, while the *tābedārs* were immediately subordinate to the latter.

The duty of the *sardār* was to collect *panchak* or quit-rent from the *sadiāls* and *tābedār ghātwāls*, to pay the same to Government or to the zamīndār, as the case might be, to depute *ghātwāls* for keeping watch and ward in the villages or on roads, to assist police officers in investigations, and to perform other police duties, when necessary. The *sadiāls* had to collect *panchak* from the *tābedārs*, to pay the same to the *sardār*, and to supervise the work of the *ghātwāls*. In some instances, also, they were deputed for watch and ward duties in the villages and along the roads. The duty of the *tābedār ghātwāl* was to keep watch over a *ghāt*, *i.e.*, generally a village or a group of two or more villages, as well as certain portions of road. He was also required to give information of any offence cognizable by the police committed within his *ghāt* and to report births and deaths, for which purpose he had to attend the police station periodically.

In *parganas* Mahiswarā, Supur, Ambikānagar, Raipur, Phulkusmā, Syāmsundarpur, Simlāpāl and Bhālāidihā, those who performed the duties of *sardārs* were called *digārs*, and the *digārs* of the last seven *parganas* exercised the powers of head-constables, when those *parganas* were in Mānbhūm. In *parganas* Mahiswarā and Chhātnā again there was a class called *jāgīrdārs*, who in the former *pargana* performed the duties of *sardārs*, and in the latter the duties of *ghātwāls*.

The duties of the *ghātwāls*, as a body, differed from those of the village *chaukīdārs*, in that they were exercised not within the

village as such, but within an area roughly determined by immemorial custom and known as a *ghāt*. The bulk of the force may be described as rural patrols working on stated beats, which did not necessarily coincide with any line of district or village road. A few did useful work in preventing or reporting crime, and more rarely, in assisting in its detection, but as a rule they neglected their duties. The system was, in fact, an anachronism, the circumstances which led to the creation of the service having long since ceased to exist. The *ghātwāls* were practically useless for police purposes, and with no definite duties to perform, they became in time perpetrators or abettors of crime. As late as 1873 the Magistrate of Bānkurā reported that "they have or have had the reputation of concocting robberies, dacoities and the like." This was no new feature, for we find Sir Charles Blunt reporting in 1802 that "instead of protecting the *pargana* from the depredations of others, they have readily seized every opportunity of joining the invaders, and many of them are by profession dacoits."

Eventually, in 1876 a Bill was introduced in the Bengal Council with a statement of objects and reasons to the effect that—"The *ghāṭwāls* are doing as little police work as they like, and that little as inefficiently as they choose, and are disputing the authority of the Magistrate to make them do anything, while the Magistrate himself has doubt as to what his lawful authority is. The expediency of legislation is therefore manifest." The Bill, which was passed in April 1877, recognized the hereditary title of *ghātwāls* whose families had been in possession since the Permanent Settlement. The heir of an hereditary *ghātwāl* could only be passed over on certain definite grounds of unfitness and with the sanction of the Local Government. The duties of *ghātwāls* were laid down, and penalties for their neglect were prescribed. Alienation of *ghātwāli* lands was forbidden; leases were not to be binding on a *ghātwāli* successor; and no civil court was to entertain a suit by a dismissed *ghātwāl* for the possession of service lands. The Viceroy and Governor-General, however, withheld his assent from the Bill, on the ground that the local legislature could not oust the jurisdiction of the civil court, and also because of various inconsistencies and defects in the wording of the Bill.

It was then determined to have a survey of all the *ghātwāli* lands and a record of the rights of the *ghātwāls* in order to separate the lands held on a variety of other titles or no title at all; to ascertain what lands were really *ghātwāli*, by whom they were held and on what terms of service, etc., so that disputes might be at

an end and proper service demanded in return for the holdings. The work was commenced in 1879, but at the end of 1884 it was found that the survey had cost an enormous sum of money, and produced nothing but a long list of civil suits, in which Government was bound to fail. Mr. Risley, C.S. (now Sir H. H. Risley, K.C.I.E.) was then deputed to compromise the suits and bring the survey to a close as quickly as possible, both of which objects he effected. The total number of tenures demarcated as *ghātwāli* was 6,011, with an area of 155,603 acres or 2,430 square miles, and the cost of the proceedings amounted to Rs. 63,380. The survey was completed in 1886-87; and on its basis an amicable settlement of the *ghātwāli* lands was undertaken in November 1894. These proceedings are approaching completion.

In all cases in which settlement has been effected, the *ghātwāls* concerned have been released from police duties. The *panchak* has been abolished, and they pay the rent assessed for their land. The assessments have been made according to prevailing rates as regards lands in the direct occupation of the *ghtwāāls*, but as regards lands held by them through their tenants, 75 per cent. of the rent realized by them from the latter has been accepted as the assessment. A concession of 25 per cent. of the total assessment has been allowed to the *ghātwāls* in consideration of the fact that they have been enjoying the lands from generation to generation on payment of a small quit-rent. The remaining 75 per cent. of the assessment is being divided equally between Government and the zamīndārs, the Government demand being fixed in perpetuity.

This amicable settlement has been made possible by the peculiar nature of the tenures. Up to the present there have been three parties supposed to be beneficiaries in the land, the State, the zamīndār and the *ghātwāl*. The State has consented to the settlement, as hitherto there has been but little return for the heavy expenditure incurred on surveys and litigation in connection with these tenures, and because the peculiar distribution of the service land rendered it impossible to arrange for adequate service, *e.g.*, one part of the district had more *ghātwāls* than could be employed on any useful purpose, while another part had not enough for the necessary watch and ward on the roads. The zamīndārs again received nothing but the quit-rent from the *ghātwāl*, whereas in the case of the *zamīndāri panchakī* lands the lands are now being made integral portions of the estates in which they are situated, the rental assessed being paid to the landlords, who again pay Government the revenue agreed upon

for the *ghāts* minus the *panchak* formerly received by them and included in the revenue demand. As regards the *ghātwāls*, as the *sardārs* grew richer, they tended more and more to pose as landholders, and the obligation of personal service, frequently involving the payment of blackmail to escape bullying by the regular police, became extremely distasteful to them. The *tābedārs*, on the other hand, were constantly in trouble between the needs of their cultivation and the requirements of the thāna in the matter of patrol. Besides this, the abolition of the system has been acquiesced in by the *ghātwāls* as relieving them from the risk of forfeiting their tenures by dismissal for disobeying orders. Such cases had occurred, and when an outsider was appointed to succeed to a vacancy created by dismissal, the family lost its land for good.

ESTATES. According to a return for the year 1887-88 the number of estates borne on the revenue roll was 910, with a current revenue demand of Rs. 4,58,000. The total number of estates in 1907 was 1,143, and the land revenue demand was Rs. 4,83,000, representing an increase of 26 per cent. in the number of estates and of 6 per cent. in the demand during 20 years. Of these estates, 1,071 with a demand of Rs. 4,81,000 are permanently settled, including a certain number added recently by the resumption and settlement of *ghātwāli* lands. The remaining estates are mainly estates which were formerly held revenue-free (*lākhirāj*), but were afterwards resumed by Government and assessed. Most of these were at first settled temporarily, but this error was rectified in January 1866, when the Board of Revenue directed that all settlements of resumed *lākhirāj mahāls* should be revised, and settlements effected with the proprietors in perpetuity. Besides the 1,071 permanently settled estates, there are 72 estates of which Government is the proprietor, 53 with a demand of Rs. 800 being temporarily settled estates, while 19 with a demand of Rs. 1,000 are under direct management. The former are mostly petty estates formed out of the surplus road-side land along the Rānīganj-Midnapore road. The latter include certain town *khās mahāls* and are also unimportant properties, which have been bought in by Government at sales for arrears of revenue.

TENURES. The tenures of Bānkurā consist of properties held under the zamīndārs and comprise (*a*) *patnī tāluks*, with their subordinate tenures called *darpatnī* and *sepatnī*, (*b*) *mukarrarī tāluks*, (*c*) *istimrārī tāluks*, and (*d*) *ijārās* including *darijārās* and *zar-i-peshgī ijārās*. The following is a brief description of each of these tenures.

It has been already mentioned that the Rājā of Bishnupur's estate became broken up towards the end of the 18th century, and that in 1806 a considerable portion of it was purchased by the Mahārājā of Burdwān, who gradually became the proprietor of four of the most important estates in the district, viz., Bishnupur, Bārahazāri, Karisundā, and the Jungle Mahāl. On these estates coming into his possession, he created under-tenures, known as *patnī tāluks*, similar to those in existence on his large estates in Burdwān and other districts. A *patnī* tenure is, in effect, a lease which binds its holder by terms and conditions similar to those by which a superior landlord is bound to the State. By Regulation XLIV of 1793 the proprietors of estates were allowed to grant leases for a period not exceeding 10 years, but this provision was rescinded by section 2 of Regulation V of 1812; while by Regulation XVIII of the same year proprietors were declared competent to grant leases for any period even in perpetuity. Finally, Regulation VIII of 1819, known as the Patnī Sale Law, declared the validity of these permanent tenures, defined the relative rights of the zamīndārs and their subordinate *patnī tālukdārs*, and established a summary process for the sale of such tenures in satisfaction of the zamīndār's demand of rent. It also legalized under-letting on similar terms by the *patnīdārs* and others.

Patnī tenures.

Since the passing of the Patnī Sale Law, this form of tenure has been very popular with zamīndārs who wish to divest themselves of the direct management of their property, or part of it, or who wish to raise money in the shape of a bonus. It may be described as a tenure created by the zamīndār to be held by the lessee and his heirs or transferees for ever at a rent fixed in perpetuity, subject to the liability of annulment on sale of the parent estate for arrears of Government revenue, unless protected against the rights exercisable by auction purchasers by common or special registry, as prescribed by sections 37 and 39 of Act XI of 1859. The tenant is called upon to furnish collateral security for the rent and for his conduct generally, or he is excused from this obligation at the zamīndār's discretion.

Under-tenures created by *patnīdārs* are called *darpatnī*, and those created by *darpatnīdārs* are called *sepatnī* tenures. These under-tenures are, like the parent tenures, permanent, transferable and heritable; and have generally the same rights, privileges, and responsibilities attached to them. They are usually granted on payment of a bonus. Section 13 of Regulation VIII of 1819 provides rules for staying the sale of a *patnī*, if it takes place owing to the intentional withholding of payment of rent by the

patnīdār with the object of ruining his subordinate tenure-holders. In such cases, the under-tenants are allowed the means of saving the *patnī* tenure and their own under-tenures, by paying into the Collector's office the advertized balance due to the zamīndār. The *patnī* tenure so preserved forms the necessary security to the depositors, who have a lien on it in the same manner as if the loan had been made upon mortgage. The depositors may then apply to the Collector for obtaining immediate possession of the defaulter's tenure; and the defaulter will not recover his tenure, "except upon repayment of the entire sum advanced, with interest at the rate of 12 per cent. per annum up to the date of possession having been given, or upon exhibiting proof, in a regular suit to be instituted for the purpose, that the full amount so advanced, with interest, has been realized from the usufruct of the tenure."

***Shikmī* tenures.**

Shikmī tenures are a class of tenures of a peculiar nature, created by Government at the settlement of resumed *lākhirāj* villages. During the investigations which were made into the validity of the rent-free tenures of the district, several villages were discovered to be held under invalid *lākhirāj* grants. They were resumed; and in the course of the measurement and assessment of the tenants' holdings preliminary to the settlement of the villages by Government, several small *lākhirāj* holdings were found. These were separately measured and assessed, and their proprietors were called upon to enter into a settlement on the same principle as was observed in the settlement of the entire village—half the assets being allowed to them as profits, etc., and half taken as the revenue due to Government. But for convenience sake, the proprietor of the entire *mahāl* was at the time of the settlement entrusted with the collection of the revenues due from his *shikmīdārs* and was allowed 10 per cent. on the collections as his remuneration. Thus came into existence the *shikmī mahāls*, the revenue of which is paid to Government through the proprietors of the village in which they are situated. The status of a *shikmīdār* is that of a tenure-holder with hereditary and transferable rights; the Government revenue paid by them is fixed in perpetuity, and is not subject to enhancement. *Shikmī* tenures may be found in almost every part of the district.

***Mukarrarī* tenures.**

The old *mukarrarī* tenures formerly existing in Bānkurā were nearly all abolished at the decennial settlement, and the *mukarrarī tāluks* subsequently created are not numerous. Those that exist have definite rights expressed in the written engagements by which they are created. It is generally specified that they shall be hereditary, and their rents are not subject to enhancement.

Hence the name *mukarrarī*, which is derived from the Persian *karār*, meaning fixed. At the creation of a *mukarrarī* tenure, the lessee pays a bonus or *salāmī*.

Darmukarrarīs are subordinate to *mukarrarīs*, and are created by the *mukarrarīdār*. These tenures are also of a fixed nature, and the rights of the lessee are the same as those of the superior holder or *mukarrarīdār* who created the tenure. *Darmukarrarī* tenures, however, are very few in number in Bānkurā.

Istimrārī tāluks also are not numerous. All those found in Bānkurā are said to have been created by proprietors of estates subsequent to the decennial settlement. The rights and privileges of *istimrārīdārs* are similar to those of *mukarrarīdārs*, and a bonus is also paid by the tenant at the time of the execution of the lease. *Daristimrārī tāluks*, or *istimrārīs* of the second degree, are rare. *Istimrārī tenures.*

The status of *ijārādārs*, or farmers, and of their subordinate *darijārādārs*, differs widely from that of the other intermediate tenure-holders described above. *Ijārādārs* hold farming leases, by which a definite amount of annual rent is fixed for a specified term, usually varying from five to thirty years. Such leases are granted not only by the zamīndārs or superior landlords, but also by subordinate *tālukdārs* or tenure-holders in an estate. The lessor cannot enhance the rent of an *ijārā* lease during its term; and on its expiry, the *ijārādār* is not entitled to renewal. If the latter is not specifically, by the conditions of his lease, debarred from creating an under-tenure, he occasionally creates a *darijārā* tenure, the term of which cannot, of course, be longer than that of his own lease. *Ijārās.*

Another kind of *ijārā* is known as a *zar-i-peshgī ijārā*, *i.e.*, a lease granted in consideration of an advance of money. It may be granted for an unspecified term of years, and made terminable on certain conditions, *e.g.*, when an estate is mortgaged as security for a loan. The term expires when the mortgagee has recovered the amount of debt and interest from the proceeds of the property. Such leases are much in vogue in this part of the country, where even the cultivators often give a *zar-i-peshgī ijārā* of their lands to the village *mahājans*.

The third class of tenures consists of lands held by actual cultivators, which comprise (*a*) *jamā* or *jot*, (*b*) *miādi jamā*, (*c*) *mukarrarī* and *maurasi jamā*, (*d*) *korfā* and *darkorfā*, and (*e*) *bhāg jot*. TENANT'S HOLDINGS.

Cultivators' holdings, called *jamā* or *jot*, are generally, but not always, held without any written engagement. The lands remain in the possession of one family from generation to *Jamā or jot.*

generation, and in most cases without any document of title. All these tenures are now governed by the Bengal Tenancy Act, VIII of 1885 as amended by Act I of 1907. In practice, a *jamā* is divided into as many parts as suit the convenience of the ryots who hold it, and the total rent contributed by the different holders thereof is paid by one of them to the *gumāshtā* or rent-collector.

Miādi jamā. The term *miādi jamā* is applied to the holding of a cultivator with only a temporary interest in his land, which he holds for a fixed term of years under a *pāttā* or lease.

Bhāg jot. Holdings for which the tenant pays a share (*bhāg*) of the produce as rent are known as *bhāg jot*. An account of this system of rent payment has already been given in Chapter VII.

Jangalburī jamā. When waste lands are leased out for the purpose of being cleared of jungle and brought under cultivation, the tenure is known by the name of *jangalburī*. Such lands are generally assessed at progressive rates of rent, payable after a certain number of years, during which no rent is paid. There used to be large tracts of waste land on which *sāl* timber grew in abundance; but most of these jungle tracts have now been reclaimed and brought under the plough. Several zamīndārs and *tālukdārs* have leased out a few of their jungle lands at a small annual rent, and others retain them in their immediate possession.

Nayābādi. A tenure of a similar kind is that known as *nayābādi*. This tenure is created by a *sanad* granted by the zamīndār or *tālukdār* to a person intending to clear and settle on waste land. The tenant is empowered by the grant to bring land under cultivation within certain fixed boundaries and is remunerated either by a gift of a special portion of the land rent-free or by deducting a regular proportion from the rent of the entire tenure.

Jalsāsan. Another tenure called *jalsāsan* is designed to encourage the permanent improvement of land, *i.e.*, a tenant obtains a grant of a fixed quantity of land either rent-free or at a small quit-rent on condition that he constructs tanks and reservoirs from which that and other lands can be irrigated.

Dakhaldāri. Another peculiar tenure called *dakhaldāri* is found only in *pargana* Simlāpāl in thāna Raipur. The holder of the tenure has a right of occupancy, but the rent of the tenure is regarded as liable to enhancement.

Mukarrarī and maurasi jamā. Some cultivators hold land under leases called *mukarrarī* and *maurasi*, the chief stipulations of which are that the rent is subject neither to enhancement nor abatement, and that the

tenure descends from father to son. These leases are generally granted on the payment of a bonus or *salāmī* by the tenant.

Korfā and *darkorfā*.

A sub-ryoti tenure subordinate to that held by an ordinary cultivator is called *korfā*. *Korfā* tenures are generally created verbally, and in some cases there are also *darkorfādārs*, or ryots holding under *korfādārs*.

SERVICE TENURES.

The fourth class of tenures consists of lands held either entirely rent-free (*be-panchak*), or liable to a nominal quit-rent (*panchak*). Such tenures were formerly very numerous in the district. How numerous and varied they were may be gathered from a letter written in 1845 by the Rājā of Bishnupur to the Judge of Bānkurā, in which he gave the following list and description of the various *panchakī mahāls* which existed in the territory of his ancestor:—(1) *Senāpati mahāl—panchak* paid for service lands held by the commanding officers of the army. (2) *Mahāl-berā mahāl—panchak* paid for service lands held by the guards of the Bishnupur fort. (3) *Chharidāri mahāl—panchak* paid for service lands held by the Rājā's mace-bearers. (4) *Bakhshī mahāl—panchak* paid for service lands held by *bakhshīs* or military paymasters. (5) *Kāshtha-bhāndār mahāl—panchak* paid for service lands held by the suppliers of fuel for the Rājā's palace. (6) *Shāgirdi-peshā mahāl—panchak* paid for service lands held by private servants of the Rājā, such as *khāwās*, *khidmatgārs*, *nāmhātās*, *goraits*, etc. (7) *Krot mahāl—panchak* paid for service lands held by the court officials of the Rājā, such as the *dīwān*, etc. (8) *Top-khānā mahāl—panchak* paid for service lands held by the gunners. (9) *Dom mahāl—panchak* paid for service lands held by drummers and musicians. (10) *Kāhārān mahāl—panchak* paid for service lands held by palanquin bearers. (11) *Khātāli mahāl—panchak* paid for service lands held by coolies and labourers for working in the fort. (12) *Hātilā mahāl—panchak* paid for the sites of markets at Bishnupur. (13) *Be-talabī mahāl—panchak* paid for lands granted by the Rājā for charitable and religious purposes.

The majority of these tenures have been abolished by the Mahārājā of Burdwān; but *panchakī lākhirāj* tenures are still to be found in *pargana* Bishnupur, where certain service and rent-free *panchakī* lands granted by the Rājā of Bishnupur for religious purposes have not been interfered with, though some service lands have lapsed to the proprietor of the estate on the decease of the servants who formerly enjoyed them. Of other service tenures which have survived, by far the most important are the *ghātwāli* tenures described above. The *chaukīdāri chākrān* lands, *i.e.*, the lands held by village *chaukīdārs* in lieu of wages have also been resumed and transferred to the zamīndārs under Act VI

(B.C.) of 1870, the *chaukīdārs* being paid from the *chaukīdāri* tax. A few other interesting service tenures are still left, such as *simānādāri*, *itmāmdāri* (or *mandalī*), *khorposh* and *hikimāl* tenures.

Simānādāri. *Simānādārs* are a body of men who do the work of *chaukīdārs* in thānas Indās and Kotalpur, and have grants of land in lieu of wages. These lands are being resumed and settled with the zamīndārs, the *simānādārs* being left in possession of their holdings as occupancy ryots under the zamīndārs concerned.

Itmāmdāri or mandali. The *itmāmdāri* or *mandalī* tenure exists only in the western portion of the district in thānas Raipur and Khātrā. The holder of the tenure performs the duties of a *gumāshtā* or collector of rents and holds a grant of land in lieu of wages, acquiring an hereditary occupancy right in the land.

Khorposh. The grants given by a zamīndār to the members of his family for their maintenance are called *khorposh* tenures. In some instances such tenures revert to the original grantor or his heirs on the death of the grantee, and in others they are hereditary.

Hikimālī. *Hikimālī* is a term applied to a grant of land assigned for the maintenance of the *hikim* or second brother of a Rājā or zamīndār. On the death of the latter, the second brother of his successor takes up the name and the land. A *hikimālī* tenure is thus dependent on the life of the Rājā or zamīndār and not of the tenure-holder himself.

RENT-FREE TENURES. Rent-free tenures form the fifth and last class of landed estates in Bānkurā district. Several varieties of this tenure exist, but none prevail to any considerable extent. Lands granted for religious purposes, such as *brahmottar*, *sivottar*, *debottar*, etc., by Hindus, and *pīrottar*, *chirāgān*, etc., by Muhammadans, are found in many villages. Besides these, there are several other rent-free tenures granted for charitable purposes, and numerous small rent-free holdings, which do not appear to have been assigned for any special purpose.

Rent-free tenure-holders have several classes of ryots directly under them, and in some cases middlemen, generally *mukarrarīdārs* or *tālukdārs*, to whom the ryots holding or cultivating the said lands pay their rent. Some proprietors of small rent-free holdings are simple cultivators, who either cultivate their rent-free lands themselves or sub-let them.

CHAPTER XI.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION.

ADMINISTRATIVE CHARGES AND STAFF.

FOR administrative purposes the district is divided into the two subdivisions of Bānkurā and Bishnupur, the former being under the direct supervision of the Collector, while Bishnupur is in charge of a Subdivisional Officer, who is generally a Deputy Collector of the Provincial Civil Service. At Bānkurā the sanctioned staff consists of three Deputy Collectors, of whom two are magistrates of the first class and one is vested with the powers of a magistrate of the second or third class; in addition to these officers, there are sometimes one or two Sub-Deputy Collectors. At Bishnupur the Subdivisional Officer is assisted by a Sub-Deputy Collector.

REVENUE.

The revenue of the district, under the main heads, rose from Rs. 7,16,000 in 1880-81, when the income-tax had not been imposed, to Rs. 8,11,000 in 1890-91 and to Rs. 9,45,000 in 1900-01. In 1906-07 it amounted to Rs. 10,81,000, of which Rs. 4,85,000 were derived from land revenue, Rs. 3,49,000 from stamps, Rs. 1,20,000 from excise, Rs. 1,06,000 from cesses, and Rs. 21,000 from income-tax.

Land revenue.

The collections of land revenue fell from Rs. 4,59,000 in 1880-81 to Rs. 4,58,000 in 1890-91, but rose again to Rs. 4,60,000 in 1900-01. In 1906-07 they aggregated Rs 4,85,000 collected from 1,143 estates, the current land revenue demand being Rs. 4,83,000, of which Rs. 4,81,000 were payable by 1,071 permanently settled estates and Rs. 800 by 53 temporarily settled estates, while the demand from 19 estates held direct by Government was Rs. 1,100. The total land revenue demand is equivalent to 25 per cent. of the gross rental of the district.

Stamps.

The receipts from judicial and non-judicial stamps rank next in importance as a source of revenue. They increased from Rs. 2,49,000 in 1896-97 to Rs. 2,79,000 in 1900-01, and rose still further to Rs 3,49,000 in 1906-07. There has, in fact, been a steady increase year after year, owing to the growth of both the number and value of suits instituted in the Civil Courts, which is

attributed to the spread of education making the people better acquainted with their rights. More than four-fifths (Rs. 2,90,000) of the receipts in 1906-07 were obtained from the sale of judicial stamps, and in particular of court-fee stamps, which accounted for Rs. 2,64,000; while Rs. 59,500 were obtained from the sale of non-judicial stamps, nearly the whole of this sum (Rs. 57,000) being due to the demand for impressed stamps.

Excise. The receipts from excise rose from Rs. 82,000 in 1896-97 to Rs. 95,000 in 1900-01, and further increased in 1906-07 to Rs. 1,20,000. The greater portion of the excise revenue is derived from the sale of country spirit prepared by distillation from the flower of the *mahuā* tree (*Bassia latifolia*). The receipts from this source amounted in 1906-07 to Rs. 54,000, or nearly half of the total excise revenue. The manufacture and sale of country spirit were previously carried on under both the outstill system and the central distillery system, *i.e.*, there were outstills serving the wild tracts to the south-west and a central distillery at Bānkurā for the supply of the rest of the district. In 1907 the contract supply system was introduced, *i.e.*, the local manufacture of country spirit has been prohibited, and a contract for the wholesale supply of spirit given out to a firm of distillers. The contractors are forbidden to hold any retail licenses for its sale, but are allowed the use of distillery and warehouse buildings for the storage of liquor. The right of retail vend is disposed of by separate shops, each of which is put up to auction; and the retail vendors are forbidden to sell liquor except at prescribed strengths, for which maximum prices are fixed.

According to the returns for 1906-07, there is one retail shop for the sale of country spirit to every 16,417 persons; and in that year the average consumption of the central distillery liquor was 4 proof gallons and of outstill spirit 53 proof gallons per 1,000 of the population. The receipts from the sale of country spirit and of the fermented liquor called *tāri* represented an expenditure of Rs. 721 per 10,000 of the population, a figure lower than that returned by any district in the Burdwān Division except Midnapore. On the other hand, the receipts from *pachwai* or rice beer are considerable, amounting to Rs. 26,000 in 1906-07, a total exceeded in only four other districts in the Province (Burdwān, Bīrbhūm, Darjeeling and the Santāl Parganas). This is the national drink of the aboriginal races, who regard it as a nutritious food and utilize it as a substitute

for a meal. The consumption of imported liquors is exceedingly small, the mass of the population being unable to afford foreign spirits and also preferring the country spirit and *pachwai* they have drunk for generations past.

The consumption of opium is not great, only Rs. 23,000 being obtained from the duty and license fees. The revenue from this source is less than in any other district in the Burdwān Division, and amounts to only Rs. 203 per 10,000 of the population. There is even less demand for *gānja*, *i.e.*, the dried flowering tops of the cultivated female hemp plant (*Cannabis indica*) and the resinous exudation on them. The consumption of this drug is less than in any district in Bengal except Angul, the duty and license fees realising only Rs. 16,000 in 1906-07, or Rs. 150 per 10,000 of the population.

Cesses. Road and public works cesses are, as usual, levied at the maximum rate of one anna in the rupee. The collections fell from Rs. 97,000 in 1896-97 to Rs. 94,000 in 1900-01, but increased to Rs. 1,06,000 in 1906-07. The current demand in the year last named was Rs. 1,05,476, of which Rs. 94,340 were payable by 1,432 revenue-paying estates, Rs. 5,580 by 1,502 rent-free properties, and Rs. 5,268 by 387 revenue-free estates. The number of estates assessed to cesses is thus 3,321, while the number of tenures is 92,704, and there are therefore 28 times as many tenures liable to pay cesses as there are estates. The number of recorded shareholders of estates and tenures is 8,760 and 104,490 respectively.

Income-tax. In 1901-02 the income-tax yielded Rs. 18,000 paid by 985 assessees, of whom 698 paying Rs. 8,000 had incomes of Rs. 500 to Rs. 1,000. At that time the minimum income assessable was Rs. 500, but this was raised in 1903 to Rs 1,000, thereby giving relief to a number of petty traders, money-lenders and clerks. The number of assessees consequently fell in 1903 to 374 and the collections to Rs. 16,000. In 1906-07 the tax yielded Rs. 21,000 paid by 463 assessees.

Registration. There are 9 offices for the registration of assurances under Act III of 1877. At Bānkurā the District Sub-Registrar deals as usual with the documents presented there, and also assists the District Magistrate, who is *ex-officio* District Registrar in supervising the proceedings of the Sub-Registrars in charge of the other registration offices. The average number of documents registered annually during the quinquennium ending in 1899 was 26,310, but in the 5 years ending in 1904 it increased to 30,380, the increase being due to the settlement of resumed *chaukīdāri* and *ghātwāli* lands.

The marginal statement shows the number of documents registered and the receipts and expenditure at each office in 1907. The number of registrations was higher than in any other district in the Division, except Burdwān and Midnapore.

OFFICE.	Documents registered.	Receipts.	Expenditure.
		Rs.	Rs.
Bānkurā ...	4,456	7,538	7,023
Bishnupur ..	3,839	4,242	1,679
Gangājalghāti...	4,785	4,947	2,281
Indās	3,974	4,449	1,943
Khātrā	2,354	2,153	1,886
Kotalpur ...	5,036	5,106	2,052
Ondā	2,712	2,851	1,426
Raipur ...	2,573	2,338	1,653
Sonāmukhi ...	2,544	2,667	1,677
TOTAL ...	*32,273*	*36,291*	*21,620*

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE. Civil justice.

The staff entertained for the administration of civil justice consists of the District Judge and Sub-Judge at Bānkurā and of six Munsifs, of whom three hold their courts at Bānkurā and the remaining three at Bishnupur, Khātrā and Kotalpur. There has been, on the whole, a steady increase in the number of civil suits in recent years, which the District Magistrate ascribes to the growth of intelligence and education among the masses, who are gradually becoming more accustomed to resort to the Civil Courts than to use criminal force in establishing their rights.

Criminal justice.

Criminal justice is administered by the District and Sessions Judge, the District Magistrate, and the Deputy and Sub-Deputy Magistrates stationed at Bānkurā and Bishnupur. The sanctioned staff at Bānkurā consists of the District Magistrate, two Deputy Magistrates of the first class and one Deputy Magistrate of the second or third class, in addition to the Sub-Deputy Magistrates of the second or third class who are sometimes stationed there. The Subdivisional Officer at Bishnupur is almost invariably a Magistrate vested with first class powers, and is usually assisted by a Sub-Deputy Magistrate of the second or third class. Besides these stipendiary Magistrates, there are benches of Honorary Magistrates at Bānkurā and Bishnupur, besides an Honorary Magistrate at each of the following places:—Gangājalghāti, Indās, Khātrā, Raipur and Sonāmukhī.

Crime.

Bānkurā has long had an unenviable reputation for harbouring organized bands of dacoits, who commit numerous dacoities within its borders or in the surrounding districts. It stands high in the list of districts in which this form of crime is prevalent; in the three years 1901-03 the average annual number of dacoities committed was 15, and though the number fell to 3 in 1904 and also in 1905, it rose again to 10 in 1906. Systematic efforts have been made in recent years to break up these gangs of dacoits, and the cases instituted have brought to light some

remarkable facts regarding them. It was found that one gang had been in existence for over 20 years and consisted of no less than 103 members, and that another had been at work since 1879. A third included 35 members, and the ring-leader of a fourth confessed to no less than 22 dacoities and 50 burglaries committed by his gang in Bānkurā between 1890 and 1901. The history of a fifth gang which carried on its operations in Bānkurā is even more remarkable, for it dates back to the Mutiny of 1857, when the gang is reported to have waylaid a body of the mutineers and stripped them of their arms and loot. It was composed of aboriginals, 76 in number, to whom were traced 30 dacoities, committed in this district and Mānbhūm between 1895 and 1905. Another gang, composed chiefly of Bhumijes, formerly known locally as *chuars* or robbers, committed crime not only in Bānkurā, which they made their headquarters, but also in Hooghly, Midnapore and Mānbhūm; no less than 18 dacoities and 7 burglaries were traced to this gang. Another famous band of dacoits consisted of Tuntiā Musalmāns, who were accountable for 22 dacoities committed in Bānkurā and Hooghly. Yet another gang, consisting of Lohārs, was in the habit of committing dacoities not only in Bānkurā, but also in Hooghly, Burdwān and the 24-Parganas.

Criminal classes. The above account of the Bānkurā dacoits will show the existence of certain classes who obtain their livelihood by habitual and organized crime. Among those who have acquired notoriety as dacoits, the Lohārs and the Tuntiā Musalmāns may be mentioned. The Lohārs are not, as in other districts, a respectable artisan class of Aryan descent but are semi-aboriginals, similar to the Bāgdis. Of late years, however, they have been endeavouring to improve their social condition, and in the District Census Report of 1891 it is stated as a fact worthy of notice that the Lohārs are gradually progressing. "They show by their acts that they are ambitious to improve their social status without publicly crying out for social precedence. Education is now gradually spreading itself among them, and they are often found to take a great interest in the observance of simple Hindu rites and ceremonies. Their love for *Harisankīrtan* is gradually bringing them in close contact with higher castes."

The Tuntiā Musalmāns have their headquarters in Midnapore, but a certain number are found in the south of the district. They are a Muhammadan caste, whose traditional occupation is cultivation of the mulberry (*tunt*) for feeding silk-worms. This

occupation having become less profitable of late years, many have taken to ordinary cultivation and field labour, others to twisting ropes from a reed colled *sar*, while others are professional thieves and dacoits. In order to watch their movements and check their depredations, it was found necessary to establish a beat-house at Siromanipur in the Kotalpur thāna.

Migration. The control of emigration to the tea gardens plays an important part in the of administrationthe district. Regarding this the Commissioner writes as follows in his Administration Report on the quinquennium 1900-01 to 1904-05:—"It appears that there was a steady increase of emigrants from year to year, but the number represents to a large extent the coolies recruited by garden *sardārs*, who are more successful in securing coolies than the recruiters employed by contractors. The number of contractors' coolies is gradually coming down with the gradual development of the free system, which has practically taken its place. During the last few months, registration under Chapter III has practically ceased, but instances of fraudulent recruitment by free recruiters have been so common and widespread that legislation is necessary, so as to protect simple and ignorant villagers from being enticed away and sent off to the tea districts under false representations. As great care is taken to see that no cooly is fraudulently recruited when produced for registration, the recruiters under the contract system, whenever they have any doubts of securing registration, betake themselves to the more easy procedure laid down under section 92 of the Emigration Act and manage to send the coolies to labour districts as free recruits. Free emigration is therefore open to many abuses, and the system goes to increase rather than to decrease the facilities of fraudulent recruitment. A large number of emigrants were repatriated last year, and most of them were recruited as free emigrants. The Magistrate states that it is very difficult to bring home to the offenders charges of unlawful recruitment for want of sufficient evidence. There were 12 depôts and rest-houses at the close of the period under review as against 5 in 1899-1900."

POLICE. For police purposes the district is divided into 9 thānas or police circles, viz., in the headquarters subdivision, Bānkurā with an area of 332 square miles, Gangājalghāti with the Barjorā outpost having a combined area of 465 square miles, Ondā (329 square miles), Raipur (333 square miles) with the Simlāpāl outpost (119 square miles), and Khātrā (343 square miles); and in the Bishnupur subdivision, Bishnupur (302 square miles), Kotalpur (133 square miles), Indās (124 square

miles) and Sonāmukhī (141 square miles). Besides the thānas, there are 11 outposts as shown below :—

Police station.	Outpost.	Police station.	Outpost.
SADAR DIVISION A.		BISHNUPUR SUBDIVISION.	
Bānkurā	Chhātnā.	Bishnupur ...	Jaypur. Jayrāmpur.
Gangājalghāti ...	Sāltorā. Mejiā. Barjorā.	Kotalpur.	
		Sonāmukhī.	
		Indās.	
SADAR DIVISION B.		TOWN POLICE.	
Ondā	Tāldāngrā.	Bānkurā ...	Rājgrām.
Raipur	Simlāpāl.	Bishnupur ...	Sonāmukhī.
Khātrā	Indpur.		

The regular police force consisted in 1906 of a Superintendent, 5 Inspectors, 31 Sub-Inspectors, 35 Head-Constables and 325 constables, a total force of 397 men, representing one policeman to every 6·6 square miles and to every 2,812 of the population. The rural force for the watch and ward of villages in the interior is composed of 249 *dafadārs* and 2,754 *chaukīdārs*, including a small body of men called *simānādārs* in the Indās and Kotalpur thānas, whose services are remunerated by grants of land ; other *chaukīdārs* are paid Rs. 4 a month.

There is a district jail at Bānkurā with accommodation (in 1907) for 301 prisoners, viz., barracks for 213 male convicts, 12 female convicts, 30 under-trial prisoners and 8 civil prisoners, cells for 6 male convicts, and a hospital with 32 beds for male convicts. There is a subsidiary jail at Bishnupur, which has accommodation for 12 male and 3 female prisoners. The industries carried on in the district jail are oil-pressing, brick-making, weaving of *darīs* and cloth, and cane and bamboo work. JAILS.

CHAPTER XII.

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT.

DISTRICT BOARD. OUTSIDE the municipalities of Bānkurā, Bishnupur and Sonāmukhī, the administration of local affairs, such as the maintenance of roads, bridges, ferries and pounds, the control of village sanitation and water-supply, the provision of medical relief, etc., rests with the District Board, assisted by the Local Boards of Bānkurā and Bishnupur and a Union Committee at Kotalpur. The District Board consists of 15 members, of whom seven are elected, four are nominated, and four are *ex-officio* members. According to the returns for 1906-07, pleaders and *mukhtārs* predominate, representing 40 per cent. of the members, while Government servants and the land-holding classes each represent 26·6 per cent.

Income. The average annual income of the District Board during the 10 years ending in 1901-02 was Rs. 1,10,000, of which Rs. 42,000 were derived from the road cess. During the quinquennium ending in 1905-06 it amounted, on the average, to Rs. 1,24,000 per annum, of which Rs. 48,000 were obtained from the road cess, Rs. 33,000 from Government contributions, Rs. 2,000 from pounds, Rs. 1,500 from ferries, and Rs. 39,500 from other sources. In 1906-07 the opening balance was Rs. 49,000, and the receipts of the year aggregated Rs. 1,15,000, including Rs. 49,000 realized from the road cess, Rs. 30,000 contributed from Provincial revenues, Rs. 1,500 obtained from tolls on ferries, and Rs. 2,000 from pounds. Here, as elsewhere, the road cess is the principal source of income, but the incidence of taxation is light, being only 9 pies per head of the population—a proportion lower than in any other district in the Burdwān Division.

Expenditure. The average annual expenditure during the decade ending in 1901-02 was Rs. 1,09,000, of which Rs. 57,000 were spent on civil works, Rs. 32,000 on education, and Rs. 2,000 on medical relief. During the 5 years ending in 1905-06 the disbursements amounted to Rs. 1,30,000, the chief items being Rs. 47,000 spent on communications, Rs. 37,000 on education, and Rs. 4,000 on medical relief. In 1906-07 the expenditure was Rs. 1,28,000, of which more than half (Rs. 79,000) was allocated to civil works,

while education accounted for Rs. 36,000. The heaviest charge on the income of the District Board is the maintenance of communications. It now maintains 61 miles of metalled roads and 541 miles of unmetalled roads, besides a large number of village tracks with a total length of 105 miles; the cost of maintaining these roads in 1906-07 was Rs. 54, Rs. 42, and Rs. 28 per mile respectively. The Board maintains 7 Middle schools and aids 2 High schools, 33 Middle schools, 169 Upper Primary schools and 868 Lower Primary schools. For the purpose of supervision, it entertains 11 Inspecting Pandits. Altogether 5 per cent. of the ordinary income of the Board was expended in the same year on medical relief and sanitation—a proportion higher than in any other district in the Division except Burdwān and Bīrbhūm. Three dispensaries are entirely maintained by it, six dispensaries receive grants-in-aid, and special measures are taken on the outbreak of epidemic diseases.

LOCAL BOARDS. In subordination to the District Board are the Bānkurā and Bishnupur Local Boards, the jurisdiction of each corresponding to the subdivisional charge of the same name. The Bānkurā Local Board is composed of 12 members, of whom six are nominated and six are elected; while the Bishnupur Local Board is composed of 12 members, all nominated by Government as the system of election has not been introduced. The Local Boards receive allotments from the funds of the District Board, and are entrusted with the maintenance of village roads, pounds and ferries, and some other small functions.

UNION COMMITTEES. There is only one Union Committee in the district, viz., that of Kotalpur, which was established in 1904-05. It has an area of 2 square miles, and a population of 6,083 persons. The Committee is administered by a Board of 7 members, and is reported to display little activity; for in 1905-06 the Committee held no meetings and spent nothing, while in 1906-07 it held only two meetings and merely spent the balance of the previous year (Rs. 350).

MUNICIPALITIES. There are 3 municipalities in the district, viz., Bānkurā, Bishnupur and Sonāmukhī. The number of rate-payers in 1906-07 was 6,954, representing 13·07 per cent. of the population (53,204) residing in municipal limits, as compared with the average of 16·15 per cent. for the whole Division. The average incidence of taxation in that year was only annas 7-5 per head of the population, as against the Divisional average of Re. 1-13-3, and varied from annas 10-1 in Bānkurā to annas 5-9 in Bishnupur and Sonāmukhī.

Bānkurā. The municipality of Bānkurā, which was established in 1869, is administered by a Municipal Board composed of 12 Commissioners,

of whom eight are elected. one is nominated by Government, and three are *ex-officio* members. The area within municipal limits in 1906 was 4·96 square miles, the number of rate-payers being 2,482 or 12 per cent. of the population ; but in 1907 the area was extended to 5·96 square miles by the inclusion within municipal limits of *mauzās* Kethiārdānga, Demurāri Gopīnāthpur, Murrā and Ladihā.

The average annual income of the municipality during the decade ending in 1901-02 was Rs. 13,000, and the expenditure was Rs. 12,000 ; and during the 5 years ending in 1905-06 they were Rs. 17,500 and Rs. 15,000 respectively. In 1906-07 the income aggregated Rs. 19,000, besides an opening balance of Rs. 3,000. The chief source of income is a tax on persons, according to their circumstances and property, assessed at the rate of 1⅛ per cent. on the income of the assessees. This tax brought in Rs. 7,000; and next in importance are a tax on animals and vehicles, which brought in Rs. 3,000, and a conservancy rate, which brought in Rs. 2,400, while fees from markets realized Rs. 1,200. The total incidence of taxation was annas 10-1 per head of the population. The expenditure in the same year was Rs. 20,500, excluding Rs. 4,000 expended on the repayment of loans, advances and deposits. The principal items of expenditure were medical relief, conservancy, drainage and public works, which accounted for 26·01, 24·1, 15·3 and 13·5 per cent. respectively of the total expenditure.

It is reported that, at the present rate of taxation, the municipality cannot undertake new projects or carry out substantial reforms for want of funds. The supply of drinking water is said to be defective, the town being mainly dependent on the two rivers on the north and south, which run nearly dry in the hot weather, and there is also a need of good tanks containing sufficient water for bathing and culinary purposes. The drainage system and lighting system are also said to require improvement. On the other hand, the drainage is believed to be better than in most of the towns in Bengal, and, on the whole, the sanitary condition of the town is good and the roads are well kept up.

Bishnupur.

Bishnupur was constituted a municipality in 1873, and has a Municipal Board consisting of 12 Commissioners, of whom eight are elected and four are nominated by Government. The area within municipal limits is 8 square miles, and the number of rate-payers is 2,804, representing 14·6 per cent. of the population residing within municipal limits. The average annual income of the municipality during the 5 years ending in 1905-06 was Rs. 10,000, and the expenditure was Rs. 9,000. In 1906-07

the income of the municipality was Rs. 10,000, of which Rs. 5,500 were obtained from a tax on persons according to their circumstances and property, levied at $1\frac{1}{8}$ per cent. on the income of the assessees, while a tax on animals and vehicles brought in Rs. 1,200. The incidence of taxation was annas 5-9 per head of the population. The expenditure in the same year was Rs. 8,000, the principal items being conservancy, medical relief, public works and education, which accounted for 21·9, 15·2, 15·5 and 10·5 per cent. respectively of the total expenditure.

Sonāmukhi. The municipality of Sonāmukhī was established in 1886, and is administered by a Municipal Board, consisting of 9 Commissioners, all of whom are nominated by Government, the elective system not being in force. The area within municipal limits is 4 square miles, and the number of rate-payers is 1,668, representing 12·4 per cent. of the population. The average annual income of the municipality during the 5 years ending in 1905-06 was Rs. 5,840, and the expenditure was Rs. 5,820. In 1906-07 its income was Rs 5,000, besides an opening balance of Rs. 1,200. The chief source of income is a tax on persons, according to their circumstances and property, levied at 2 per cent. on the income of the rate-payers, which brought in Rs. 4,000; the total incidence of taxation was annas 5-9 per head of the population. The expenditure in the same year was Rs. 6,000, the principal items of expenditure being conservancy (23·5 per cent.), medical relief (13·8 per cent.), and education (12·2 per cent.).

CHAPTER XIII.

EDUCATION.

PROGRESS OF EDUCATION.

THE backward state of education in the district half a century ago may be gathered from the account given in 1863 by Colonel Gastrell in the first Statistical Report of Bānkurā. In 1847 a Deputy Collector, who had an intimate acquaintance with the habits of the people and had travelled over every part of the district, reported:—"Education is very little attended to. Few, indeed, can do more than write their names even in the towns. In the villages education may be said to be entirely neglected. In the towns the children of tradespeople attend the Guru Mahāsaya or Pandit's school until they understand common accounts." Up to 1861 there were only 12 schools, with 967 pupils, established by Government; and the state of these schools was not satisfactory owing to the want of interest in them taken by the people. "But," said Colonel Gastrell, "where such utter darkness had prevailed, any light, breaking in and dispelling no matter how little of it, is to be hailed with delight as the dawn of a brighter day." As regards the state of education in his own day, Colonel Gastrell wrote:—"Education is neither much sought after nor thought of by the lower classes. Few can read, still fewer write."

The progress which has been made since the above remarks were written has been undoubtedly great, though, Bānkurā being a poor and backward district, the advance has not been so rapid as in richer parts of the country. Figures showing the extension of education for any lengthy period cannot be given, as the district did not acquire its present dimensions until 1879; but an idea of the progress made recently can be gathered from the returns for the last 25 years. According to statistics furnished by the Education Department, the number of schools in the year 1881 was 1,410 and there were 32,243 scholars on the rolls. In 1891 the number of educational institutions had increased to 1,534 and the number of pupils to 39,057. During the next 10 years there was a falling off in the number of schools, while the attendance remained almost stationary, the number of the

former in 1901 being 1,300, while the aggregate of pupils was 39,092. The census of that year showed that the total number of persons able to read and write was 103,679, representing 9·3 per cent. (18·3 males and 0·5 females) of the population. According to the returns for 1906-07, there are, in addition to a college at Bānkurā, 1,406 schools attended by 43,315 pupils, the number of boys receiving instruction being 46·8 per cent. of the number of boys of school-going age.

GENERAL STATISTICS.

Of the total number of schools, 1,330 with 42,608 pupils are public institutions, and 76 with 707 pupils are private institutions. Of the former, 12 schools attended by 660 pupils, are under public management, five being managed by Government and seven by the District Board; while 1,318 schools, attended by 41,948 pupils, are under private management, 1,184 being aided, while 134 are unaided. The inspecting staff consists of 2 Deputy Inspectors of Schools, 8 Sub-Inspectors of Schools, one Assistant Sub-Inspector and 11 Inspecting Pandits.

COLLEGIATE EDUCATION.

The only college in the district is the college at Bānkurā maintained by the Wesleyan Mission, which is affiliated up to the B. A. Examination in Arts. The college was established in 1903, and new buildings are being constructed, including a hostel for Hindu boys, another for Christian students, and a house for the Principal. A fuller account of the college will be found in Chapter III.

SECONDARY EDUCATION.

The number of secondary schools is 63, and the attendance at them is 5,090. Of these schools no less than thirteen are High schools, at which 2,133 boys receive instruction. The largest is the Kuchkuchiā High school, with 336 boys on the rolls; this school is maintained by the Wesleyan Mission, and is aided by Government. One school is maintained by Government, viz., the Zilā school at Bānkurā, and nine receive grants-in-aid, viz., the High schools at Kuchkuchiā, Bishnupur, Kotalpur, Kuchiākol, Sonāmukhī, Palāsdānga, Rol, Māliārā and Belitaore. Besides these, there are three unaided schools, viz., the Bānkurā Hindu High school and the High schools at Rājgrām and Indās. There are altogether 28 Middle English schools, including 25 aided and 2 unaided schools, besides one maintained by the District Board. Secondary vernacular education is losing popularity, and the number of Middle Vernacular schools has decreased to 22, of which 6 are maintained by the District Board and 16 are unaided.

PRIMARY EDUCATION.

The total number of boys' Primary schools in the district is 1,059, of which 190 are Upper Primary and 869 are Lower Primary schools. With the exception of two Upper Primary

schools attached to the two Guru Training schools, all the schools are under private management, 956 being aided and 101 unaided. The attendance at these schools is 34,119, viz., 32,468 boys and 1,651 girls. There are also 88 night schools attended by 1,591 pupils, mostly sons of artisans and day labourers. It is reported that most of the Upper Primary schools have separate buildings, but that they are not very suitable for the purpose, and that there are scarcely any Lower Primary schools with separate buildings. For want of such accommodation, the classes are generally held in the common *pūjā* houses of the village or in the verandah of some well-to-do villager's house: a *pūjā* house, it may be explained, is the house set aside for the performance of the *bārwaris* (religious and musical entertainments) of the village.

FEMALE EDUCATION. The advance of female education, at least of a primary character, has been very noticeable in recent years; for the number of Primary girls' schools rose from 90 in 1901-02 to 183 in 1906-07 and the attendance from 1,466 to 2,987, besides 1,654 girls reading in boys' schools. In all, 4,641 girls received instruction in 1906-07 as compared with 3,209 in 1901-02, *i.e.*, the increase during the decade was no less than 41 per cent. At present, the majority of these schools are taught by male teachers belonging to neighbouring boys' schools, and there are only a few girls' schools with a separate staff. The number of female teachers is very few, for there are only five schools with female teachers, and they are all Christian.

SPECIAL SCHOOLS. There are four Training schools for the training of Primary school teachers, of which three are intended for male and one for female teachers. Of the former, two are under the direct management of the Education Department, and one, at Sārengā, is maintained by the Wesleyan Mission. That Mission also maintains the Training school for female teachers mentioned above.

INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION. Industrial or technical education is practically non-existent, the only technical school being that known as the Bānkurā Mission Technical School, which is maintained by the Wesleyan Mission. At this school carpentry, shoe-making, weaving and the manufacture of cane baskets are taught.

OTHER SCHOOLS. Under this head may be classed the Sanskrit *tols* and musical schools established in the district. Sanskrit *tols* number 15 and have 211 boys on the rolls, the pupils being taught Sanskrit grammar, literature, rhetoric, logic, Hindu philosophy and Hindu law. There are 5 musical schools, at which vocal and instrumental music is taught to 70 boys.

The number of private institutions is 76 and that of the pupils studying at them 707. These 76 schools include 65 Sanskrit *tols* not adopting departmental standards, and 11 *maktabs* teaching Arabic and Persian of an elementary character. PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS.

The number of Muhammadan pupils studying in public institutions in 1906-07 was 1,528, representing 3·5 per cent. of the number of pupils of all creeds. The proportion of Muhammadans to the total population, according to the census of 1901, is 4·5 per cent., so that it would appear that the Muhammadans of Bānkurā are more backward from an educational point of view than the Hindus. It is noticeable, moreover, that nearly all of the boys under instruction attend Primary schools, and only 123 attend secondary schools. EDUCATION OF MUHAMMADANS.

The number of aboriginal pupils in the various public institutions in the same year was 2,148, of whom 73 were Christians and 2,075 were non-Christian Santāls. Special efforts are being made by the Wesleyan Mission to diffuse education among the Santāls, and a Training school has been established for the training of teachers in the Santāl schools maintained by the Mission. EDUCATION OF ABORIGINALS.

Altogether 14 boarding houses have been established, of which twelve are intended for male and two for female students. The latter are under the management of the Wesleyan Mission, and are located at Bānkurā and Sārengā. HOSTELS AND BOARDING HOUSES.

There are two public libraries, viz., one at Bishnupur, for which a small building was constructed in 1904 within the Municipal office compound, and a small library opened in 1903 at Kākatiā in the Bishnupur subdivision. The only newspaper published in the district is a Bengali paper known as the *Bānkurā Darpan*, a weekly paper, printed at Bānkurā, which deals chiefly with matters of local interest. LIBRARIES AND NEWSPAPERS.

CHAPTER XIV.

GAZETTEER.

Ajodhyā.—A village in the Bishnupur subdivision, situated 7 miles north-west of Bishnupur. The village contains a charitable dispensary and the residence of one of the leading zamīndārs of the district.

Ambikānagar.—A village in the Bānkurā subdivision, situated on the south bank of the Kāsai river, 10 miles south-west of Khātrā, with which it is connected by an unmetalled road. This village has given its name to a *pargana* extending over 151 square miles, and was formerly the headquarters of an ancient family of zamīndārs, whose history has been given in the article on Dhalbhūm.

Bāhulārā.—A village in the Bānkurā subdivision, situated on the south bank of the Dhalkisor river, 12 miles south-east of Bānkurā and 3 miles north of Ondā. It contains a temple dedicated to Mahādeo Siddheswar, said to have been built by the Rājās of Bishnupur, which Mr. Beglar has described as the finest brick temple in the district, and the finest though not the largest brick temple that he had seen in Bengal. He gives the following account of it in the Reports of the Archæological Survey of India, Vol. VIII.

"The temple is of brick, plastered; the ornamentation is carefully cut in the brick, and the plaster made to correspond to it. There are, however, ornaments on the plaster alone, but none inconsistent with the brick ornamentation below. I conclude, therefore, that the plaster formed a part of the original design. The mouldings of the basement are to a great extent gone, but from fragments here and there that exist, a close approximation can be made to what it was; some portions are, however, not recoverable. The present entrance is not the original old one, but is a modern accretion, behind which the real old doorway, with its tall, triangular opening of overlapping courses, is hidden. This old opening is still to be seen internally; it consists of a rectangular opening, 41 courses of bricks in height, over which rises the triangular portion in a series of corbels, each 5 courses in depth; the width of the opening is 4 feet 10 inches There is no dividing sill, and from the façade

of the temple it is evident that the cell, with its attached portico in the thickness of the wall itself, stood alone without any adjuncts in front. There are, however, the remains of a *mahāmandapa*, which was added on in recent times ; but it is widely different in construction and in material to the old temple, and is probably not so old as the British rule in India. The object of worship inside is named Siddheswar, being a large lingam, apparently *in situ*. I conclude, therefore, that the temple was originally Saivic. Besides the lingam there are inside a naked Jain standing figure, a ten-armed female, and a Ganesa; the Jain figure is clear proof of the existence of the Jain religion in these parts in old times, though I cannot point to the precise temple or spot which was devoted to this sect. The temple had subordinate temples disposed round it in the usual manner; there were seven round the three sides and four corners, and one in front, the last being most probably a temple to Nandi, the *vāhana* of Siva. The whole group was enclosed within a square brick enclosure; subordinate temples and walls are equally in ruins now, forming isolated and long mounds respectively."

Bānkurā.—Principal town and administrative headquarters of the district, situated in 23° 14′ N. and 87° 4′ E. on the Kharagpur-Asansol branch of the Bengal-Nāgpur Railway. The town is bounded on the north by the Gandheswarī, and on the south by the Dhalkisor or Dwārkeswar, both rivers uniting at a place called Bhūtsahar, 3 miles to the south-east. For municipal purposes, it includes the adjoining villages of Rāmpur, Nūtanchati, Kendudī, Lokpur, Rājgrām, Kānkātā, Pātpur, Gopīnāthpur, Ladihā, Murrā, Kethiārdānga, and Demurāri Gopīnāthpur, the area thus grouped together for administrative purposes being 5·96 square miles. The town proper is, however, little more than a mile in length from west to east and slightly over half-a-mile in breadth from north to south. The population, according to the census of 1901, is 20,737, of whom 19,553 are Hindus, while 993 are Muhammadans, and 158 are Christians.

Before the opening of the railway, Bānkurā was a small and somewhat straggling town, but since then it has been expanding greatly, and new houses are springing up in every quarter. The number of those roofed with tiles or built of brick is still comparatively small, however, and almost all are thatched with straw. The public buildings, *e.g.*, the public courts and offices, hospital, zenāna hospital, jail, post office, and Zilā school, lie in the south-western quarter of the town near the residence of the Collector, a fine bungalow in spacious grounds known as Hill House. A little further off in the same direction is the

European quarter, with the circuit house, between which and the public offices are the police lines, these being the old barracks formerly occupied by the troops stationed at Bānkurā. There are three main roads running from west to east through the town, of which the middle one is lined with shops and is known as the bazar. This is the mercantile quarter, the principal merchants being mostly Mārwāris. There is also a circular road called the Pilgrim Road, as it was made, about 20 years ago, in order to divert the stream of pilgrims, which formerly passed through the centre of the town on the way to Purī, and thereby to diminish the danger of contagion and disease. It branches off from the Bānkurā-Rānīganj road at the village of Kesiākol north of the Gandheswarī river, which it crosses in a southerly direction, joining the Bishnupur road a little to the east of Bānkurā at the tank called Nabīn Datta's tank. Two markets are held within the municipality, one in the town and the other in the suburb of Rājgrām. The former, which belongs to the municipality, is held in a masonry structure built by public subscription in 1866, the greater portion of the cost being contributed by Rai Gadādhar Banerji Bahādur of Ajodhyā. The latter was constructed in 1888 at the cost of the municipality.

The town itself is modern, and there is no building of antiquarian interest. There are a few Hindu temples and a Muhammadan mosque, the oldest temple being that of Raghunāth at Rāmpur, which bears date 1561 of the Saka era or *A.D.* 1640. A number of the modern buildings owe their origin to the enterprise of European missionaries. The first missionary who worked here was the Revd. J. Weitbrecht of the Church Missionary Society, who used to visit the town from Burdwān as far back as 1840. He never resided in Bānkurā, but established several schools, the chief of which, founded in 1846, has since become the Zilā school. The first European missionary who made his residence in Bānkurā was the Revd. J. R. Broadhead of the Wesleyan Mission, who commenced work in the year 1877 and resided here for 10 years. During that time he built the present girls' Training school in the Mission compound, the church, and other property belonging to the Mission in Lālbazar to the east of the town. In 1889 the Kuchkuchiā High school was started by the Revd. W. Spink, and the work thus begun has been carried on steadily. The Wesleyan Mission now maintains a large college and High school, a Middle Vernacular school, a female Training school, and three Primary girls' schools. The work in connection with the Leper Asylum on the outskirts of the town is also under the supervision of members of the Mission,

though the buildings, which were erected in 1902, belong to the Mission to Lepers in India and the East. The town also owes to the Mission the Central Hall near the post office, built by the Revd. J. W. Duthie in 1899.

The climate of the town is dry and healthy, and the place is now beginning to be regarded as a health resort for Indian gentlemen, especially for those suffering from febrile complications, with the result that several residents of Calcutta are building houses in the town. The drainage is naturally good but there is difficulty in obtaining a good supply of drinking water during the hot weather. In the months of April, May and June, the water in most of the tanks becomes scanty, and it is necessary for the people to get water from the Gandheswarī and Dhalkisor rivers. The railway station is situated about a mile from the town itself and has removed the difficulty of communication which formerly existed, but cart and passenger traffic is still impeded to some extent by the rivers on either side. On the north there is a causeway across the Gandheswarī river, but it is often impassable for days at a time, when the river rises in flood during the rains. On the south the bulk of the traffic is brought by bullocks and bullock carts along three main roads to the south-west, south and south-east. As the river Dhalkisor flows from west to east along the southern portion of the town, each of these roads has to cross the river before reaching the town; and as there is no causeway across this river, and it is a wide stretch of sand during the hot weather, the difficulty of bringing fully loaded carts across it is considerable.

Bānkurā Subdivision.—Western subdivision of the district, lying between 22° 38′ and 23° 38′ N. and between 86° 36′ and 87° 25′ E. with an area of 1,921 square miles. The subdivision is bounded on the north by the river Dāmodar, which separates it from Burdwān, on the south by Midnapore, on the east by the Bishnupur subdivision, and on the west by Mānbhūm. It is composed of undulating country covered in many places with scrubby jungle, coppice wood and rocky boulders. The soil is mainly laterite, and sub-soil water is found at a depth of 30 to 50 feet, after impinging on hard solid rock. To the east it merges in the alluvial plain, but to the west the surface is more irregular, the undulations become more marked, and numerous low jungle-clad hills occur. Few of the hills are of any great height, but Susuniā is 1,442 feet and Bihārīnāth 1,469 feet above sea level. Here, and especially in the Khātrā and Raipur thānas to the south-west, the scenery is very like that of Chotā Nāgpur. The principal rivers are

the Dāmodar to the north, the Dhalkisor and the Gandheswarī, which unite at a distance of about 3 miles from Bānkurā, the Sālī, which is a tributary of the Dāmodar, the Silai, the Jaypandā and the Kāsai, which flow through the south-west, and the Bhairabbānkī, which flows through the south of the subdivision. These rivers are hill streams, which rise in flood during heavy rain and as speedily subside; but at times the floods in the Dhalkisor, Dāmodar, Silai and Kāsai last for days together.

The population of the subdivision was 712,055 in 1901, as compared with 692,357 in 1891. The density of population is not great, for the subdivision, which lies on the fringe of the Chotā Nāgpur plateau, and is less fertile and less thickly peopled than the Bishnupur subdivision, supports only 371 persons to the square mile. It contains 4,069 villages and one town, Bānkurā, the headquarters of the district.

Bishnupur.—Headquarters of the subdivision of the same name, situated in 23° 5′ N. and 87° 20′ E. a few miles south of the Dhalkisor river. For municipal purposes the town is held to include a number of villages, the area within municipal limits being 8 square miles, but the town proper is only about 2 miles in length. It has a population, according to the census of 1901, of 19,090 persons.

Historically, Bishnupur is the most interesting place in the district, as it was the capital of the Rājās of Bishnupur, who, even as late as the period of Muhammadan rule, though nominally tributary to the Nawābs of Murshidābād, frequently exercised independent powers. A sketch of the history of the house has been given in Chapter II, and it will be sufficient here to state that in the 18th century the family rapidly declined. They were impoverished by the ravages of the Marāthās, and the famine of 1771 depopulated their territory and completed their ruin. The misfortunes of the Rājā were aggravated by family dissensions and by the crushing weight of land revenue, which he was unable to pay, so that eventually his estate was sold by Government for arrears of revenue in 1806. Their estates thus lost, the Rājās were dependent upon pensions granted by Government and some revenue-free property which they had originally assigned to various idols. The income of this *debottar* property was small, however, and liabilities had been incurred which no Rājā could clear off. So far from decreasing, their debts continued to grow, and gradually most of the *debottar* property had to be mortgaged or sold to meet the demands of creditors.

The last of the Rājās was Rām Krishna Singh Deb, who died leaving no son. In obedience, it is reported, to the wishes of the Rājā, the eldest Rānī transferred the property by a deed of gift to Nīlmani Singh, a nephew of her husband. He, in his turn, became heavily involved in debt, and what little *debottar* property was left was alienated by an *ijārā* lease for 51 years, which, however, is said to be ignored by his widow. Government has granted a pension of Rs. 75 to the Rājā's widow for her maintenance and for the education of her son, a young boy, named Rām Chandra Singh Deb. Other recipients of pensions are a niece of the late Rājā and two other widows. Though the title of Rājā died with Rām Krishna Singh Deb, and his descendants are in such reduced circumstances, the leading representatives of the family are still popularly called Rājās or Rānīs, as the case may be, and are treated with great respect by the people.

Other branches of the family are found in Jāmkundi, Indās and Kuchiākol, a separation having been effected after the struggle which, as related in Chapter II, took place at the end of the 18th century between the ruling Rājā, Chaitanya Singh, and his kinsman, Dāmodar Singh. Dāmodar Singh made himself a new home at Jāmkundi, where he commenced building fortifications, which were never completed. The descendants of Chaitanya Singh are found in the ancestral home at Bishnupur and also at Indās and Kuchiākol.

Evidence of the power once held by the Rājās of Bishnupur is afforded by the remains still found in the town, though there is little beyond a number of temples and some ancient tanks to justify the tradition that "Bishnupur was the most renowned city in the world, and more beautiful than the beautiful house of Indra in heaven." The buildings, it is said, were of pure white stone; within the walls of the palace were theatres, embellished rooms, dwelling houses, and dressing rooms; and there were also a treasury, houses for elephants, barracks for soldiers, stables, storehouses, armouries, etc. The city was once strongly fortified by a long connected line of curtains and bastions, measuring seven miles in length, with small circular ravelins covering many of the curtains. Within this outer line of fortifications, and west of the city, lies the citadel, and within this again the Rājā's palace. What the palace may have been in the palmy days of its ancient chieftains it is difficult to say, but at present an insignificant pile of brick buildings, surrounded by ruins, marks the site. A number of fine temples still remain, however, to attest the former prosperity of the Bishnupur Rāj. These temples are situated partly in the modern town of Bishnupur,

partly inside the old fort, and partly near the Lālbāndh, a fine large sheet of water south of the fort. In the town are the temples known as Malleswar, Madan Mohan, Muralī Mohan, and Madan Gopāl; in the fort are the Syām Rai, Jor Banglā, Lāljī and Rādhā Syām temples ; while the Lālbāndh group includes three temples bearing the collective name of Jor Mandir, the temples called Kālā Chānd, Rādhā Gobind, Rādhā Mādhab, and another undated temple, called Nandalāl. Other undated temples in the fort are a duplicate of the Jor Banglā temple and a few minor shrines near the Rājā's palace ; and in the town close to Madan Mohan is another undated temple in a dilapidated state.

According to Dr. Bloch, Superintendent of the Archæological Survey, Eastern Circle, the twelve dated temples range in chronological order as follows* :—

Date in Malla year.	Date A.D.	Name of temple.	By whom built.
928	1622	Malleswar ..	Bīr Singh.
949	1643	Syām Rai ...	Raghunāth Singh, son of Bīr Hāmbīr Singh.
961	1655	Jor Banglā ...	Ditto Ditto.
962	1656	Kālā Chānd ...	Ditto Ditto.
964	1658	Lāljī ...	Bīr Singh, son of Raghunāth Singh.
971	1665	Madan Gopāl ...	Siromani, queen of last Rājā.
971	1665	Muralī Mohan ...	*Id.* (called Chūdāmani in the inscription.)
1000	1694	Madan Mohan ...	Durjan Singh.
1032	1726	Jor Mandir ...	Probably Gopāl Singh.
1035	1729	Rādhā Gobind ...	Krishna Singh, son of Gopāl Singh.
1043	1737	Rādhā Mādhab ...	Chūdāmani, queen of last Rājā.
1064 (Saka 1680)	1758	Rādhā Syām ...	Chaitanya Singh.

Regarding their general features Dr. Bloch writes:—"It is not on account of their age or their historical associations that these temples claim the interest of archæologists, but because they represent the most complete set of specimens of the peculiar Bengali style of temple architecture. This style has not yet died out. It will be familiar to any one who has taken a trip up the Hooghly river from Calcutta. All along the banks of the stream one meets with rows of six to twelve tiny little shrines with curved roofs, arranged in a line, and over these rise here and there larger buildings with one to five or even more

* Report, Arch. Surv. Bengal Circle, for 1903-04, and Report, Arch. Surv. Ind. for 1903-04. A different chronology is given by Mr. Beglar in Reports Arch. Surv. Ind., Vol. VIII, pp. 203-205.

small towers. The general principle upon which the last type is arranged is fairly simple. The temple consists of a square building with a curved roof; upon this rises one tower in the centre, either alone or surrounded by four, eight, and even twenty-four small corner towers. According to their number, the temple is called *pancharatna*, *navaratna*, etc. The main building has an open gallery, generally on three sides only, which surrounds the inner chamber or *thākurbāri*, the room where the image is placed upon the *vedi* or altar. Stairs lead up to the towers of the roof. The outside walls are covered all over with small curved brick panels, the carvings representing religious scenes, generally from the history of Krishna, or similar favourite subjects.

"In Bishnupur this type is represented by the temples of Syām Rai and Madan Mohan, built of bricks, and by those of Lāljī, Rādhā Syām and Madan Gopāl, built of laterite. The first temple is perhaps the oldest specimen of the *pancharatna* type that exists in Bengal. Nowhere outside Bengal proper has this style of temple architecture been found, and owing to the late date of all the existing specimens, it is difficult to decide whether it existed at all in pre-Muhammadan times. The curved battlements of the roof, made in imitation of the roof of the ordinary village hut, certainly must have been peculiar to the architecture of Bengal before the Muhammadans took over the country, for they have introduced it into their own buildings, evidently adopting merely one of the characteristic features of the architecture of the country. . . Another type of modern Bengali temple is represented by the Jor Banglā in Bishnupur. In general plan it differs little from the previous type. The central *thākurbāri* or sanctuary is surrounded on four sides by a gallery and has a few small side chambers, one for the stairs leading up to the tower on top of the roof. But there is a conspicuous difference in the elevation of the main building. As its name Jor Banglā or double bungalow implies, it looks like two Bengali huts joined together. The roof likewise has one tower in the centre. The type is not so common as the *pancharatna* or *navaratna* types, but is found in other places besides Bishnupur."*

Altogether four distinct types may be distinguished. The first has a single square tower and is represented by the Malleswar temple. The second has a single tower resting on a square building with the curved Bengali roof; the best examples of this type in brick are Madan Mohan, and in laterite Lāljī and Rādhā Syām. Of the *pancharatna* type, with five towers on the

* Report, Arch. Surv. Ind. for 1903-04.

same building, the best example in brick is the Syām Rai temple, and in laterite the Madan Gopāl temple. The fourth type is the Jor Banglā type with two buildings shaped like a Bengali hut joined together, with a small tower on top. Among these temples the Madan Gopāl temple is unique, as it is the only specimen in laterite of the *pancharatna* type. The Jor Banglā temple is, however, perhaps the most interesting one from an archæological point of view. The Syām Rai temple has the finest specimens of carved tiles, its walls being covered with carvings in brick; and the Madan Mohan is also a fine building in fair preservation, with a deep masonry water basin outside the temple court to the north. The oldest of the temples is Malleswar.

The materials of which the temples were built are either brick or laterite, which is easily obtained in the district. The brick temples are richly covered with carvings, and in spite of the unsuitable material, the laterite temples also have carvings here and there, but most of the latter have been covered by plaster and cement.

Besides these temples, there is a curious structure outside the fort called the Rāshmancha, a high structure which was formerly used for putting up idols during the Rāsh festival in honour of Krishna. It consists of a square chamber, surrounded on each side by three galleries, with ten, eight and five arched openings respectively, and covered by a large pyramidal roof. Unfortunately, the building is in a very bad state of repair, and it would be too costly to restore it. The masonry work seems to have been put up in a hurry; and it is now partly fallen and loosened everywhere, so that the restoration of the building would practically involve dismantling and rebuilding it entirely.

The fort is surrounded by a high earthen wall and has a broad moat round it. The approach is through a fine large gateway built of laterite, with arrow slits on either side of the entrance for archers or riflemen. This gateway, which is known as the *Pāthar darjā, i.e.*, the stone door, has a double-storeyed gallery on each side of the central passage, but the floor of the upper storey, which was originally supported by horizontal laterite beams, is now broken. In the western wall of the fort is a curious old building consisting of four solid brick walls with no entrance except from above. It has no roof, and, according to local tradition, was a dungeon in which criminals were thrown and left to die of starvation, their sufferings being aggravated by the nails which studded its bottom and sides. It appears more probable, however, that it served the prosaic but more useful purpose of a water-reservoir. The fort enclosure is a picturesque

place and would be not unlike an English park, were it not for the numerous temples scattered over it.

There are also a number of cannon lying about uncared for. One of these is a remarkable piece of iron ordnance, apparently made of 63 hoops or short cylinders of wrought iron welded together, and overlying another cylinder, also of wrought iron, the whole being well welded and worked together. The indentations of the hammers and the joining of the hoops are still plainly visible. Though exposed to all weathers, it is still free from rust, and has a black polished surface. Its extreme length is 12 feet 5½ inches, the diameter of the bore being 11½ inches at the muzzle, and 11¼ inches throughout the remainder of its length. It is now lying half buried in the ground, and a similar gun is said to be at the bottom of one of the lakes. Tradition states that a deity gave them to one of the old Rājās of Bishnupur, and the one still above ground is held in great veneration by the people. It is known as Dalmardan (commonly pronounced Dalmadal), and popular legend relates that in the reign of Gopāl Singh, when Bhāskar Pandit attacked Bishnupur at the head of the Marāthās, the god Madan Mohan himself fired it and repelled the invaders.

On a high rampart just outside the fort gate are four more cannon, made of wrought iron, about 5 feet long and varying in thickness from 6 inches at the muzzle to a foot at the breach. The muzzle of one is shaped like a tiger's head and has ornamental bands round the barrel; the others are plainer, but have one or two ornamental bands. Two have burst, but the other two are still fired once a year to announce to the dwellers in Mallabhūm the time of the Sandhi Pūjā on the second day of the Durgā Pūjā festival. One of the former shows clearly enough the way in which it was made. Long bands of iron are placed horizontally on small iron hoops forming the bore, and this again is covered with larger wrought-iron hoops welded together, which form the outside of the barrel. It is said that there were formerly many more of these guns, and that the others are now buried in the moat at the foot of the ramparts, having been wantonly thrown down into it.

A quaint legend attaches to the introduction of the worship of the god Madan Mohan mentioned in connection with the Dalmardan gun. According to some, the idol of this god was originally in the house of a Brāhman named Dharani, who was a resident of a village in *pargana* Bishnupur. According to others, it was in the house of a Brāhman of the same name in Bīrbhūm, part of which lay within the territory ruled over by

the Bishnupur Rājās. Rājā Bīr Hāmbīr, it is said, saw this idol while out hunting, and attracted by its beauty and by a sweet scent, resembling the perfume of a lily, which emanated from it, determined to secure it. The Brāhman, however, would not part with the idol, and the Rājā therefore stole and brought it to Bishnupur. The Brāhman went out in search of his beloved idol, and at last came to Bishnupur; but the idol was kept concealed, and the whole town echoed with *Harisankirtan*, under the orders of the Rājā. In despair, the Brāhman was about to drown himself in the river Birai, when a woman told him that the Rājā had hidden away the idol.

The Brāhman accordingly confronted the Rājā, and threatened that unless he showed him the image of the god, he would kill himself. The Rājā promised to show it to him next morning, and ordered his artisans to prepare a figure which should be its exact counterpart. This he tried unsuccessfully to palm off on the Brāhman, and at last had to show him the real idol. The Brāhman, however, still refused to part with it, until the god Madan Mohan himself appeared in a dream, and told him that he was pleased with the Rājā and would not leave him. After that, Madan Mohan remained at Bishnupur, enjoying the devout veneration of its Rājās, and numerous stories are told of his divine powers. The original idol was at last lost by Rājā Mādhab Singh, when *pargana* Bishnupur was sold for arrears of revenue. The Rājā went to Calcutta to prefer an appeal and thus regain his zamīndāri, taking the idol with him, as he used to worship it every day. There he took a loan from Gokul Mitra of Bāghbazar, pledging the idol for its repayment. The Rājā lost his case, and Gokul Mitra would not allow him to take the idol away until he had paid off his debt. As the Rājā could not do this, the idol was kept in Calcutta, and there it has remained ever since.*

Lakes.

In the vicinity of the town and within the old fortifications there are seven picturesque lakes, called Lālbāndh, Krishnabāndh, Gāntātbāndh, Jamunābāndh, Kālīndibāndh, Syāmbāndh and Pokābāndh; the gardens and pleasure grounds of the ancient Rājās are said to have been laid out along the Lālbāndh. These lakes were made by the ancient Rājās, who taking advantage of the natural hollows, built embankments across them so as to confine the surface drainage. They served to furnish the city and fort with a never failing supply of good fresh water, and also helped to flood the moats round the forts, adding greatly to the strength of the place. But unfortunately these lakes have now

* Other traditions regarding the loss of the idol will be found on p. 30.

silted up, and a considerable portion has been cultivated and turned into paddy fields.

Apart from the remains described above, there is little of interest in the town. It contains the usual subdivisional courts and offices, two Munsifs' courts, a sub-jail, High school, dispensary and inspection bungalow, which call for no description. The railway station is situated a mile from the town proper. The portion of the town occupied by the subdivisional offices goes by the name of Marāthā Chhāunī, *i.e.*, the Marāthā camp; and south of it lies the entrance to the old fortifications which is called *Bīr darjā*, *i.e.*, the warrior's door. In the town proper the paucity of good, substantial brick dwelling-houses is somewhat noticeable. The people say that the chief cause of this was the rapacity of former Rājās, which rendered it dangerous for any one to show signs of wealth. Under these circumstances, mud and thatch proved safer than brick and mortar; and though the immediate cause has been long since removed, the modern townsmen adhere to the unpretentious dwellings of their forefathers. Another striking feature is the number of stagnant tanks dotted all over the town, which are often a source of disease. The chief industries are the manufacture of brass and bell-metal utensils, conch shell ornaments, silk fabrics and tobacco. The silk fabrics and tobacco have more than a local reputation, and the scented tobacco made here is said to be one of the best brands in Bengal.

Bishnupur, it may be added, was formerly famous for its musical institutions, and there are still several Indian musicians of some renown, as well as a musical school.

Bishnupur Subdivision.—Eastern subdivision of the district, lying between 22° 54′ and 23° 25′ N. and between 87° 15′ and 87° 46′ E., and extending over 700 square miles. It is bounded on the north by the river Dāmodar, on the south by the districts of Hooghly and Midnapore, on the east by Burdwān, and on the west by the Bānkurā subdivision. The subdivision is for the most part a flat alluvial plain presenting the appearance of the ordinary paddy fields in Bengal, but in the western portion, and in the tract bordering on the Midnapore district, the land is undulating, the soil is lateritic, and the surface is covered with low scrub jungle. The principal rivers are the Dhalkisor, Birai and Sālī. The Dhalkisor flows nearly through the middle of the Bishnupur thāna from west to east. The Birai is a tributary of the Dhalkisor, and the Sālī enters the subdivision from the west and falls into the Dāmodar. The population was 404,356 in 1901 against 377,311 in 1891, the density being 578 persons to the

square mile. It contains 1,523 villages and two towns, *viz.*, Bishnupur, its headquarters, and Sonāmukhī.

Chhātnā.—A village in the Bānkurā subdivision, situated on the Bānkurā-Puruliā road, 8 miles west of the former place. It contains a police outpost and a station on the Bengal-Nāgpur Railway. There are some remains of archæological interest, of which the following account is given by Mr. Beglar in *The Reports of the Archæological Survey of India, Vol. VIII.* "The principal remains consist of some temples and ruins within a brick enclosure; the enclosure and the brick temples that existed having long become mere mounds, while the laterite temples still stand. The bricks used are mostly inscribed, and the inscription gives a name which I read as Konaha Utara Rājā, while the *pandits* read it as Hamira Utara Rājá; the date at the end is the same in all, viz., Saka 1476. There are 4 different varieties of the inscriptions, two engraved and two in relief; the bricks were clearly stamped while still soft and then burnt. Tradition identifies Chhātnā with Vāsuli or Vāhuli Nagara. At Daksha's sacrifice, it is said, one of the limbs of Pārvatī fell here, which thence derived its name of Vāsuli Nagara or Bāhulyā Nagara, a name mentioned in the old Bengali poet Chandī Dās. Its present name Chhātnā is derived from a grove of *chātim* or *chātni* trees, which existed here. The Rājās of the country were originally Brāhmans and lived at Bāhulyā Nāgara. One of them would not worship Pārvatī under her form of Vāsuli Devī, and her favour being withdrawn from him, he was killed by the Sāmantas (Saonts ?) Santāls, who reigned a long time. At last, the people rose up and killed all the Saonts they could; one man only escaped by hiding in the house of a low caste potter (Kumhār). For this reason, to this day, the Saonts will eat and drink with the Kumhārs.

"To this man Vāsuli Devī appeared in a dream, and encouraged him to try his fortune, assuring him of success. The man was filled with profound respect for her, and having undergone various fasts, etc., he gathered together 11 other Saonts and kept wandering in the jungles. One day, when very hungry, they met a woman with a basket of *kendus* on her head. She, pitying their condition, gave them one apiece from her basket; they asked for more, and she gave; but one of them impatiently snatched away one from her. However, the 12 Saonts were refreshed, and the woman was highly pleased. Calling them, she said—"Go nto the jungle and take 12 *kend* or *kendu* saplings, and go and fight for your Rāj; Vāsuli Devī and I will restore your Rāj." They accordingly sallied out, killed the Rājā, and obtained

possession of the kingdom again. These twelve ruled jointly; the man who had snatched the *kend* fruit died first; the remaining eleven ruled by turns till, finding it too troublesome, they agreed to give the sole power to one of their number. The descendants of these men are the present Sāmanta Rājās, who call themselves Chhatris.

"The temple is ascribed to Hamira Utara Rājā and the legend about it is that Vāsuli Devī one night appeared in a dream to the Rājā, and said—"Behold, certain cartmen and *mahājans* are passing through your territory and are at this moment under a particular tree; they have with them a stone in which I have taken up my abode. Take it and set it up to be worshipped, for I am pleased with you, and will remain with you." The Rājā, accordingly sent men and stopped the *mahājans* and cartmen, and seized the stone in payment of ground rent for the ground they had occupied during the night. He then set it up in the temple which we now see."

Another version of these legends and a history of the family of the zamīndārs of Chhātnā will be found in the article on Sāmantabhūm.

There is a tank at Chhātnā called Bolpokharia. Although small in area, it is deep, and its water never fails. It is believed to be very ancient; indeed, the family records of the zamīndārs of Chhātnā refer to it as in existence before the reputed date of the foundation of their family (1403 A.D.). A quaint legend attaches to it. It is said that in the days when the Rājās of Chhātnā were very powerful and the goddess Vāsuli was very much revered, a girl about 8 years old asked a *sānkhāri*, *i.e.*, a woman selling shell bracelets, who was passing by the side of the tank, to give her some bracelets. The woman having enquired who would pay the price, she replied that her father was a certain Deghoria who worshipped Vāsuli, and that he would pay her out of the money kept in the wall of his house. On this, the woman gave her the ornaments, and going to the Deghoria informed him of what had happened and asked for the price of the bracelets. The Deghoria, who had no daughter, was surprised, and his surprise became the greater when he found money at the place mentioned. He then went with the woman to the Bolpokharia tank, and there two hands decorated with the shell bracelets appeared above the water.

Chhinpur.—A village in the Bānkurā subdivision, situated about 5 miles south-east of Ondā, and 6 miles west of Bishnupur, at a distance of about a mile south of the Bānkurā-Bishnupur road. It contains a ruined temple built of laterite, which is said

to have beeen erected by the Bishnupur Rājās. It is known as the temple of Syāmsundar Thākur, as it used to contain an image of that deity before it became dilapidated.

Dhalbhūm.—A name given to *parganas* Supur and Ambikānagar, *i.e.*, the tract of country comprised within the Khātrā thāna. According to tradition, this tract was originally ruled over by a Rājā of the washerman caste, called Chintāmani Dhobā; and the *pai* or grain measure used in these *parganas* is still called *Chintāmani pai*. Legend goes on to say that Dhalbhūm was wrested from him by one Jagannāth Deb of Dholpur in Rājputāna, who went on a pilgrimage to Jagannāth (Purī), and on his way back paid a visit to the Nawāb at Cuttack. The Nawāb called him "Shāhzādā" meaning a prince, and the quick-witted Rājput at once begged that the title thus given might be confirmed. Pleased by his ready address, the Nawāb gave him some of his troops to enable him to win the title by carving out a principality for himself. Jagannāth Deb then came to Supur, attacked and defeated Chintāmani Dhobā, and became Rājā of Supur. In commemoration of this conquest, Jagannāth Deb was called Dhabal, and enjoyed the title of Shāhzādā bestowed on him by the Nawāb. After 32 generations had passed, the Supur Rāj, as it is locally called, was divided in consequence of a disputed succession, Tek Chandra, the elder son of the Rājā, receiving a 9½ annas share, and the younger Khargeswar a 6½ annas share. The former continued to live at Supur, and the latter settled at Ambikānagar about 8 miles from Supur. The descendants of Tek Chandra became heavily involved in debt, and the greater portion of the Supur estate has consequently been sold. The residence of the present representative of this branch of the family is at Khātrā about two miles south of Supur. The descendants of Khargeswar still live at Ambikānagar, but their estate has been sold in satisfaction of debts. Both families are Kshattriyas by caste, and are related to the families of Bishnupur, Raipur, Syāmsundarpur and others.

Dharāpāt.—A village in the Bishnupur subdivision, situated about 5 miles north of Bishnupur, at a distance of 2 miles to the west of the Bishnupur-Pānāgarh road. It contains a temple dedicated to an idol called Syām Chānd Thākur, commonly known as Nengtā Thākur; legend relates that on the death of the founder of the temple the deity performed his *srāddha* ceremony The reputed founder of the temple was one Advesh, Rājā of Dharāpāt; and the temple has an inscription in Bengali characters, in which the date 1626 or 1616 Saka (A.D. 1704 or 1694) can be made out. Barren women of the locality visit the

shrine, and worship the idol in the hope that by doing so they will be blessed with offspring.

Ekteswar.—A village situated about 2 miles south-east of Bānkurā on the north bank of the river Dhalkisor. The village derives its name from a temple dedicated to Siva, called Ekteswar, which is said to have been built by the Rājās of Bishnupur. A well in this temple contains the symbol of Siva, a lingam called *anādi*, as it is believed that it sprang up miraculously and was not fashioned by mortal hands. Large gatherings, of which a description is given below, take place here every year on the penultimate day of the month of Chaitra, and besides that the shrine is visited daily, especially on Mondays, by Hindus who come to make offerings or to worship the god. The following account of the temple is given by Mr. Beglar in *The Reports of the Archæological Survey of India, Vol. VIII.*

"The temple is remarkable in its way ; the mouldings of the basement are the boldest and the finest of any I have seen, though quite plain. The temple was built of laterite, but has had sandstone and brick additions made to it since. There are traces of three different restorations or repairs executed to this temple. The first was a restoration of the upper portion, which had apparently fallen down. In the restoration, the outline of the tower and the general appearance of the temple before its dilapidation appears to have been entirely ignored, and a new design adopted. After this, repairs on a small scale were carried out, of which traces are to be seen in various patchy portions of brick and mortar. Lastly, a series of brick arches were added in front of the temple. The object of worship inside is a lingam, which is said to have thrust itself up through the ground. Several pieces of sculpture, both broken and sound, and almost all Brahmanical, lie in groups on platforms outside, none of any special interest and none inscribed."

Every year the *Charak Pūjā* is observed at this shrine with great enthusiasm. The festival, or *parab*, commences in the middle of the month of Chaitra. On the fourteenth day before the end of the month the *pāt bhaktā*, as the chief devotee is called, shaves and prepares himself to live the life of an ascetic till the close of the festival. Long before the dawn of the next day, the loud sound of the drum awakens the sleeping inhabitants of the neighbourhood and reminds them that the great *parab* has approached. On this day the *pāt bhaktā* is admitted, for the time being, into the order of devotees, and wears the *uttariya* or sacred thread. Thenceforward, he daily takes out from the temple the *pāt* or sacred seat, consisting of a wooden plank

studded with iron nails and having an iron pillow, and bathes it in a neighbouring tank. From day to day the number of devotees increases. Clad mostly in coloured clothes, with nothing but coloured napkins to protect their heads and shoulders from the summer sun, these devotees proceed in batches to and from the temple, with baskets of flowers or garlands in their hands, followed by the beating of drums, repeating loudly and fervently the various names of the god Siva. On the 27th day of the month the majority of the *bhaktās* become initiated; and on the 28th (or the 29th, if the month has 31 days) on what is known as the *phalbhāngā* day, they eat nothing but fruit, and have by immemorial custom liberty to take fruit from any tree or garden they like. The next day, known as the *dadurghatā* day, is the most important day of the festival, for it is the *parab* or *gājan* day.

On this day a *melā* or fair is held within a spacious compound adjoining the temple, which is attended by thousands of people of all classes, male and female, young and old, from every part of the neighbouring country, all in their best attire. The crowd becomes larger as the day advances, and is at its largest in the afternoon. The whole place is a lively market, where articles of the most miscellaneous description, including toys and clay figures for children, are exposed for sale. Just before evening the *pāt* is taken to the river *ghāt*, is there worshipped by the devotees, and is then carried back to the temple, with the *pāt bhaktā* lying upon it, on his back, followed by the crowd of devotees. The pathway from the river *ghāt* to the temple is filled with a long procession of devotees, attired in their peculiar manner, with reeds, baskets of flowers, and garlands in their hands, round their heads, and round their necks. They have fasted the whole day, and have not had even a drop of water to moisten their lips, but repeat as usual, in loud voices, the various names of the great deity, and scatter flowers over the *pāt*; here and there one sees solitary *bhaktās* not walking on foot but rolling on the ground towards the temple. Later on, the pathway is illuminated, not by oil lamps or candles, but by numbers of female devotees carrying on their heads earthen pots filled with burning charcoal, kept alive by pouring powdered resin over it. As night advances, the crowd gradually withdraws, and only a few spectators remain to pass the night in the holy place. Among other ceremonies performed in the darkness which follows, a great fire is lit, which is said to be an imitation of the cremation of a *satī* or virtuous wife with the corpse of her husband, the ceremony being therefore called *satīdāha*.

The last (*Sankrānti*) day of Chaitra was the day set apart for *charak* or swinging, which was formerly regularly practised but has now been given up. Early on the morning of the *Sankrānti* day, a ceremony known as *āgun sannyās*, *i.e.*, walking over burning charcoal, took place. A long post of strong *sāl* wood, over 30 feet high, was set up in the open plain adjoining the temple. The top had a strong pivot, to which was affixed a large cross beam, about 24 feet long, which revolved round it, about two-thirds being on one side and one-third on the other. A long rope was tied firmly to and suspended from the end of the smaller portion of the beam. At the other end was fastened another short rope with a large hook affixed to its lower end. This structure was known as the *charak gāchh* or swinging tree. On one side of it, a raised rectangular platform, about 20 feet high, was formed by placing four beams upon four posts planted in the ground with slender cross-beams over them.

When the people were ready, the *charak* post was sanctified by a priest with the customary *pūjā*. The smaller arm of the whirling cross-beam at the top was turned and brought over the wooden platform. The man who was to swing climbed the platform by a temporary staircase of wood with some other devotees, while two more stood below holding the longer rope in their hands. When he was ready, they would reduce the pressure on the rope, so as to make the arm of the cross-beam on their side go up and the other arm bend down. The hook was then thrust through the flesh on the back of the man; but if he showed any signs of fainting, he was not allowed to undertake the risk of swinging. Otherwise, he was lifted off his feet by the men below pulling down the other end of the beam; and one or both of them holding the large rope went quickly round the post, so as to whirl the man in the air. This continued for 10 or 15 minutes, according to the man's power of endurance, the devotee all the while uttering the names of Mahādeva and scattering flowers upon the assembled worshippers below. His turn being over, the others would follow him one by one until it was time for them to disperse.*

Indās.—A village in the Bishnupur subdivision, situated 10 miles north of Kotalpur. It is the headquarters of a thāna, and contains a High school and sub-registry office. Some descendants of the Bishnupur Rājās reside in the village.

Jāmkundi.—A village in the Bishnupur subdivision, situated 9 miles east of the Jayrāmpur outpost and about 12 miles north-east

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* I am indebted to Kumār Ramendra Krishna Deb, Collector of Bānkurā, for the above account of the *Charak Pūjā*.

of Bishnupur. It was formerly the headquarters of an old family of zamīndārs belonging to a collateral branch of the Bishnupur Rājās. Rājā Gopāl Singh, one of the most famous Rājās of Bishnupur, who flourished in the first half of the 18th century, had two sons, the elder of whom succeeded his father, while the younger was given the *jāgīr* of Jāmkundi, which was afterwards converted into a zamīndāri. Dāmodar Singh, the claimant of the Bishnupur Rāj at the close of the 18th century, settled here and commenced making fortifications, which, however, were never completed. Nar Singh, the last of the line, died without issue, and his widow adopted Surendra Nāth Singh Deb, a son of Rai Rādhā Ballabh Singh Deb Bahādur of Kuchiākol. On his death in 1888, after he had attained his majority and succeeded to the estate, the zamīndāri reverted to the widow of Nar Singh. The village is also known as Telisāyar.

Khātrā.—A village in the headquarters subdivision, situated 23 miles south of Bānkurā. It is the headquarters of a thāna, and contains a Munsif's court and a sub-registry office. It has long been the headquarters of an influential family of zamīndārs, an account of whose history will be found in the article on Dhalbhūm.

Kotalpur.—A village in the Bishnupur subdivision, situated 21 miles east of Bishnupur. It is the headquarters of a police station and contains a Munsif's court, sub-registry office, dispensary, and High school. Weaving is the principal industry, cloth for tents, bandages, etc., being manufactured in the village and in its neighbourhood.

Kuchiākol.—A village in the Bishnupur subdivision, situated 10 miles south-east of Bishnupur and 5 miles south of the Jaypur police outpost. It contains a High school and Middle Vernacular school, and is a centre of betel cultivation. A large tank, called Telibāndh, on the north-west of the village forms the source of a small rocky stream. The village is the headquarters of a family of zamīndārs, belonging to a collateral branch of the Bishnupur Rājās. The founder of the family was Nimai Singh Deb, the second son of Rājā Chaitanya Singh Deb, who purchased 22 *mauzās* when *pargana* Bishnupur was sold for arrears of revenue in the beginning of the 19th century. His grandson, Rādhā Ballabh Singh Deb, received the title of Rai Bahādur in recognition of his good services and the public spirit he displayed during the famine of 1874.

Lokpur.—A village in the Bishnupur subdivision, situated 4 miles north-west of Kotalpur. It contains a shrine held in great veneration by the Muhammadans of the neighbourhood, who

make vows and offerings there. The local legend connected with this shrine is that many generations ago a saint named Ismail Ghāzi, who was a notable champion of Islām, warred against the Hindu Rājā of Garh Mandāran and was killed in battle. His head was removed miraculously, but a single drop of blood dropped on the spot where the shrine now stands. The latter is built of stone, and is said to have been erected in the course of a single night. The shrine is in charge of a family of local *fakīrs*, some revenue-free lands being assigned for its maintenance. In the adjoining district of Hooghly there is a legend that Shāh Ismail Ghāzi invaded Orissa with success and was falsely accused by a Hindu of attempting to set up an independent kingdom at Mandāran. He was called to Gaur and there beheaded by the order of Husain Shāh. The headless trunk straightway mounted a horse which stood near, and rode off to Mandāran, where it was buried. It seems at least an historical fact that Ismail was a general of Husain Shāh, who invaded Orissa in the beginning of the 16th century, gained a victory over the Orissan army and then returned to Mandāran (the modern Bhitargarh in the Hooghly district), where he built a fort in which he lies buried.

Māliārā.—A village in the north of the headquarters subdivision, situated a few miles south of the Dāmodar, 5 miles west of Barjorā. It contains a charitable dispensary and the residence of one of the leading zamīndārs of the district.

The family traces its descent back to Deo Adharya, who accompanied Mān Singh, the well-known Hindu general of the Emperor Akbar, to Orissa, but instead of returning to his country with Mān Singh, settled at Māliārā. Having subdued the robbers and dacoits who at that time ravaged the country under the leadership of 12 chieftains, he cleared away jungle, and brought the land under cultivation. Eventually he received a settlement of *tāluk* Māliārā from the Nawāb of Murshidābād, together with the title of Rājā; and after his death his descendants continued to hold it on payment of the fixed revenue to the Nawāb. According to the family records, the third of the line had a feud with the Rājā of Bishnupur, in the course of which he was treacherously killed after several battles, and his son Gopāl Dās Adharya was forced to pay revenue to the Rājā of Bishnupur. But the Bishnupur Rāj family declare that he was killed in open battle, after Bīr Singh of Bishnupur had been forced to invade his territory in consequence of his oppression of the people. However this may be, it appears that his descendants continued to pay revenue to the

Rājās of Bishnupur; and at the time of the decennial settlement, Jai Singh received the settlement of his zamīndāri at the hands of the British Government. The present zamīndār of Māliārā is Bābu Rāj Nārāyan Chandrādharya, whose rental is reported to be Rs. 20,733 a year, the land revenue demand being Rs. 4,377. He is a Kanauj Brāhman by caste, and is known locally as Rājā.

Raipur.—A village in the extreme south of the Bānkurā subdivision, situated close to the southern bank of the Kāsai river, 36 miles south of Bānkurā. It contains a sub-registry office, police thāna and charitable dispensary. It was for many generations the headquarters of an influential family of zamīndārs. Tradition relates that the founder of the family was a Chauhān Rājput, who came from Rājputāna during the reign of Mughal emperors, subdued the surrounding country, and assumed the title of Sikhar Rājā. The family founded by him has continued in this part of the district and forms the subject of several traditions. The last Rājā of the family, having lost his principal general, Miran Shāha, in a battle with the Marāthās, committed suicide by jumping, with his wife and children, into a tank called Sikharsāyar. This is a large deep tank to the south of an old fortification called Sikhargarh, which is said to have contained the residence of Sikhar Rājā; ruins of buildings and temples are still to be found within it. On the western bank of the tank lies the tomb of Miran Shāha; he is regarded as a saint, and vows are still offered at his tomb. It is said that, after the death of the last Sikhar Rājā, his *purohit* or spiritual guide succeeded him and lived at the village of Gurapārā near Raipur, but eventually the estate passed to Fateh Singh, a younger brother of Rājā Krishna Singh of Bishnupur, who had been driven away from Bishnupur, and taken shelter with the Rājā of Barābhūm. He overcame the last Rājā of the family of the Sikhar Rājā's *purohit*, settled at Raipur, and was granted a *sanad* by the Nawāb of Murshidābād, when he passed through this part of the country on his way to Orissa. The zamīndāri is involved in debt, and is now let out on *ijārā* to Messrs. Gisborne & Co. in satisfaction of debts.

Near Raipur there is a tank, called Sānkhāriā, on the bank of which is a shrine of the goddess Mahāmāyā. A legend is told about the tank similar to that already mentioned in the article on Chhātnā. The goddess, it is said, assumed the form of a girl and obtained a pair of bracelets from a *sānkhāri* or seller of conch shell ornaments. Next day a Brāhman saw the miraculous vision of a pair of hands, with these bracelets on the wrists,

uplifted above the water of the tank. That night he dreamt that the goddess appeared to him and told him to go early in the morning to the tank, where he would find a piece of stone, on which her image would appear. The Brāhman did so, and having found the stone, installed it on the bank of the tank as the representation of the goddess Mahāmāyā. The Rājā of Raipur then built a shrine for her, and made grants of rent-free lands for the maintenance of her worship.

Sābrākon.—A village in the extreme south-east of the head-quarters subdivision, situated about 10 miles south of Bishnupur, and 3 miles from Asurgarh. It contains a shrine with an idol of Rām Krishna, of which the following legend is told. A holy *sādhu* came from the north-west with two idols, one called Rām (Balarām) and the other Krishna, and lived in the jungle near Sābrākon. One day when he was away begging, the idols assumed the form of two boys and began to dance round the hut. A milkman happened to be passing by on his way to Bishnupur, and the boys handed him a mango, which they told him to give to the Rājā. On his arrival at Bishnupur, however, the milkman forgot all about it, and that night both he and the Rājā dreamed about the mango. Next morning, while he was going to the Rājā with the mango, he met a messenger who was coming for it. The Rājā, having heard his story, set out to see the boys, but they were no longer to be seen. He begged the *sādhu* to give him the idols, and the latter at last consented to give him one of the two. It is not known which he gave, and hence the idol is called by the joint name Rām Krishna. The Rājā erected a temple for the idol and made grants of land for the maintenance of its worship. The idol is of black stone and little bigger than half a cubit, but is regarded as being very beautiful. It is said that no bird can fly over the top of the temple, for on attempting to do so, it falls down senseless. The temple of Rām Krishna stands on the bank of a rivulet called Purānādhār, which is said formerly to have flowed round the temple; its dried-up bed can still be seen on the north and east.

Sāmantabhūm.—A name given to the tract of country now comprised within the Chhātnā outpost. The traditional history of this tract is that it was conquered in 1325 Saka or 1403 A.D. by one Sankha Rai, a Sāmanta or general of the emperor of Delhi, who had fallen into disfavour and returned to his home at the village of Bāhulānagar. The tutelary goddess of the village was Vāsuli, who appeared to him in a dream and instructed him to proceed towards the east and settle at a village called Chhātnā, where there was a tank called Bolpokharia, where the goddess said

she would come after two generations. Sankha Rai accordingly came to Chhātnā and having settled there, enriched himself by giving protection to all silk-merchants who passed through this part of the country. His grandson, Hāmir Uttar Rai, enlarged the territories to which he succeeded and was given the title of Rājā by the Muhammadan Nawāb. He was, we are told, a pious Hindu, who revered Brāhmans, cherished the poor, and spent his days in the worship of the gods. His piety was rewarded; for one night he dreamed that the goddess Vāsuli appeared before him, and said—"I am pleased with your devotion and have come from Bāhulānagar with a band of traders in the shape of a grindstone. Go thou, therefore, to them and bid them give you the grindstone." The Rājā obeyed the goddess and placed the stone in a temple which he had built for it. On the stone there appeared an image, and from that day to this it has been worshipped as the goddess Vāsuli.

This Rājā was succeeded by his son Bīr Hāmbir Rai, during whose reign one Bhawānī Jhārāh, with the assistance of the Rājā of Pānchet, attacked Chhātnā and nearly extirpated all the members of the Rāj family, the Sāmantas. Twelve of them escaped and fled to Silda (now in Midnapore), but after a time came back to Chhātnā, killed the usurper, and regained the Rāj. These twelve were sons of Bīr Hāmbir Rai and ruled over the Rāj by turn for a month at a time. During their reign, it is said, Nisanka Nārāyan, a Kshattriya of Sikāri Fatehpur, came to Chhātnā on his return from Jagannāth, and found such favour with the twelve brothers that they gave him one of their daughters in marriage, made him ruler of the country in their stead, and bestowed upon him the title of Sāmantābaninārth, *i.e.*, king of the land conquered by the Sāmantas. This title the representatives of the family still hold.

Of the three successors of Nisanka Nārāyan tradition has nothing of interest to relate, but the fourth of the line founded by him, Khara Bibik Nārāyan, is said to have given shelter to the Rājā of Pānchet, when he fled from his territory on account of some domestic feud, and to have built a temple for the goddess Vāsuli in 1656 Saka or 1636 A.D. He was killed by his son, Swarūp Nārāyan, during whose time the Marāthās made an inroad into his territory. The Rājā, we are told, defeated them in a pitched battle, cut off the heads of 700 of them, and sent them to the Nawāb of Murshidābād who, pleased with this heroic deed, granted the Rājā a rent-free *pāttā* of the whole zamīndārī, which grant was called *Hindu Hārāmi*. He was succeeded by

his son Lakshmī Nārāyan, who for some time enjoyed the zamīndāri rent-free, and when the British dominion was established, went to Midnapore and took settlement of it at an annual revenue of 2,144 sicca rupees. Of the zamīndārs who succeeded him there is little of interest to relate. In the time of the rebellion of Gangā Nārāyan, the then proprietor of the estate rendered loyal aid to Government; and during the Mutiny Ananda Lāl sent 400 men and a cannon to Puruliā to assist the authorities. The estate is now involved in debt, and the greater portion of it has been let out in *ijārā* to Messrs. Gisborne & Co. The head of the family is still popularly called Rājā, although Government does not recognize the title.

Sārengā.—A village in the extreme south of the Bānkurā subdivision, situated about 5 miles south-east of Raipur. There was formerly an indigo factory here; and the place contains a station of the Wesleyan Mission, of which an account will be found in Chapter III.

Simlāpāl.—A village in the Bānkurā subdivision, situated 24 miles south of Bānkurā. It is the headquarters of an old family of zamīndārs, who trace back their descent to one Srīpati Mahāpātra. According to the account given in the article on Tungbhūm (compiled from information furnished by former zamīndārs of Syāmsundarpur and Phulkusmā). Srīpati Mahāpātra was the spiritual guide and general of Nakur Tung and was given a grant of *pargana* Simlāpāl when the latter conquered Tungbhūm. But the Simlāpāl family state that Srīpati Mahāpātra came from Bīr-Rāmchandrapur in Cuttack to Simlāpāl, while on a pilgrimage, and conquered the surrounding country, now known as *parganas* Simlāpāl and Bhālāidihā. At first, the whole zamīndāri was called *pargana* Simlāpāl, but after the death of the seventh Rājā, Chiranjib Singh Chaudhuri, it was divided, as in the case of the zamīndāris of Supur and Ambikānagar, Syāmsundarpur and Phulkusmā, between two brothers, Lakshman Singh Chaudhuri and Laskar Singh Chaudhuri. The elder brother got a 10-annas share, now called *pargana* Simlāpāl, and the younger brother a 6-annas share, now called *pargana* Bhālāidihā. The heads of both families, who are Utkal Brāhmans by caste, are generally called Rājās and bear the appellation of Singh Chaudhuri; other members of the family are called Mahāpātras.

Sonāmukhī.—A town in the Bishnupur subdivision, situated 21 miles north of Bishnupur and 11 miles south of Pānāgarh railway station. It was constituted a municipality in 1886, the area within municipal limits being 4 square miles. The population, according to the census of 1901, was 13,448, of whom 13,261 were

Hindus and 185 were Muhammadans, while there were two persons belonging to other religions. The town contains a High English school, sub-registry office, charitable dispensary, and inspection bungalow, and is the headquarters of a police thāna; there is also a High school opened in 1887 in commemoration of the Jubilee of Queen Victoria.

Formerly a large factory of the East India Company was established here, and numbers of weavers were employed in cotton-spinning and cloth-making. One of the earliest notices of Sonāmukhī occurs in the records of the Board of Revenue, and consists of a complaint made by the Company's Commercial Resident stationed there regarding obstruction to trade by the Rājā of Burdwān, upon which an officer was deputed to make an enquiry, and the Rājā was forbidden to interfere in any way with the commercial business of the Company's factories. The introduction of English piece-goods led to the withdrawal of the Company from this trade, for the local products were not able to compete with imported European articles. Formerly also the town contained an indigo factory and a Munsif's court.

At present silk weaving, pottery making and the manufacture of shellac are the principal industries of the place. The industry last named was till 10 years ago large and prosperous, and there were several lac factories established by the local merchants in the Rānchī district, to which artisans were sent from Sonāmukhī. The town itself contains a temple called Girigobardhan, which is reported to be a fine specimen of architecture and sculpture. There are numerous tanks, the biggest of which in the centre of the town is known simply as the *Sāyar*. There is also a shrine dedicated to a local saint named Manohar, which is a place of pilgrimage visited by many Vaishnavas. A large gathering of Vaishnavas takes place annually and lasts three days, commencing on Srīrāmnavamī day, *i.e.*, generally in the month of Chaitra.

The legend about the saint is as follows. There was a very devout Brāhman, named Srīrām Dās Adhikāri, at Sonāmukhī. One day, when he was worshipping his god Syāmsundar, the beauty of a milkmaid caused his thoughts to wander, and ashamed of his weakness he cut off his genitals and died. This Brāhman left a son and a daughter, both of whom were minors. Two days after his death, a Vaishnava came to the temple of Syāmsundar and stated that he had been sent by the deceased Adhikāri, who was going to Brindāban, to look after his children and the god Syāmsundar. This Vaishnava was Manohar Dās. He brought up

the children and married the daughter to a Brāhman, whose descendants became afterwards priests (*sebaits*) of the deified saint. Manohar performed many miracles, cured incurable diseases, and after his death became the deity of the Tāntis (weavers) of Sōnamukhī, who then formed the bulk of the population of the town. The Tāntis set apart a small portion of their income for the maintenance of the shrine and for the celebration of an annual festival, besides gifts at the marriage of girls and other donations. A pair of wooden sandals are placed over the tomb, and are worshipped by the votaries.

Tradition says that the town owes its name to a goddess Sonāmukhī (the golden-faced), the nose of whose image was broken off by the famous Muhammadan iconoclast, Kālāpāhār.

Sonātapal.—A village in the Bānkurā subdivision, situated 4 miles east of Bānkurā on the bank of the Dhalkisor. It contains a large temple ascribed to the Rājās of Bishnupur, of which the following account is given by Mr. Beglar in *The Reports of Archæological Survey of India, Vol. VIII.* "Two miles north-east of Ekteswar is the village of Sonātapal; it is situated at the point where the Dhalkisor river splits into two, to join again lower down. Of the two channels, the one to the left is the main one now, but, I think, the other one was the principal one before ; the sandy bed marking its former extent shows that it was larger than the left channel. Near the junction or fork of the two channels is a tall brick temple, solidly built of bricks measuring 12 inches by 8½ inches ; thirty-three courses of bricks with the interposed mud cement make up 7 feet of height. The temple is remarkably solid, the dimensions of the sanctum inside being only 12 feet square, but the great height and the material, brick, need a greater thickness than stone. The roof of the cell begins to contract by overlapping courses at a height of 18 feet. The overlaps are at first of six courses each, then after four such overlaps there are five overlaps of five courses each, after which the overlaps are of four, and subsequently of three and of two courses each. The entrance is of the usual style of overlapping openings; it is 6 feet 1 inch wide. The overlaps are one of six courses, two of five courses each, seven of four courses each, five of three courses each, and one of two courses, there being altogether 61 courses disposed in 16 overlaps on each side to the point where the two sides of the triangle approach to within 4 inches of each other.

"The temple stands on a high plinth, now a shapeless mound. It does not appear, from the absence of the dividing sill in the opening, that the temple had any *mandapa* in front, and the façade

is indeed complete as it is, there being no part or line where the walls of any chamber or structure in front could touch the present façade without hiding some ornament, or falling upon some moulding or ornamental sculpture. The long platform, therefore, in front of the temple (now a terrace of earth and rubbish), must have been meant for open air gatherings, as is common to this day, especially in *melās* or fairs, or for a subordinate temple facing the main one. Close to the temple, and on the low ground, which in floods is under water, are several mounds, which still yield bricks. The mounds, as well as the temple, are ascribed to Sālibāhan, and the mounds near the river are said to be parts of his *garh*, the other parts having been washed away by the left-hand channel, when the main stream first took that direction; the old name of the place is said by some to have been Hāmiradāngā. The temple was covered with plaster, and richly and profusely ornamented. The plaster, from its ornamentation, corresponding in all parts with the cut brick ornamentation below, I consider to have formed part of the original design, and not, as is too often the case, added afterwards. The plaster has, however, come off in most parts; the top of the temple has disappeared long ago, and is now a shapeless mass of ruin, on which young trees are allowed to take root and flourish undisturbed. It is a pity that a fine temple, as this must have been, should have been allowed to decay."

Susuniā.—A hill in the Bānkurā subdivision, situated about 12 miles north-west of Bānkurā, rising to a height of 1,442 feet above sea-level. To the local sportsmen it is well known as the resort of bears, panthers, hyænas, and other wild animals, which find shelter among its rocks and caves. The hill is also an object of interest to the Indian community from a religious point of view. There are two springs near the foot of the hill, and close to one of these is a shrine sacred to Nar Singh. Here crowds assemble every year, and in the usual Indian fashion commingle their devotions with the worldly occupations of sale and barter. Commercially, Susuniā is a valuable property, being to all appearances one vast quarry, practically inexhaustible, its circumference being over six miles. The mineralogical character of the stone is as follows. It is a pegmatite (quartz and felspar), in which the proportion of felspar is so small that it may be termed a hard, fine-grained, greyish-white laminated sandstone, with minute cloudy veins of bitaniferous iron in very fine granular specks of much brilliancy when seen in a bright light. The effects of these cloudy veins is to give to the polished surface of the stone the appearance of a very coarse, dull, yellowish

grey marble speckled with black. Quarries were first opened in Susuniā in 1859 by the late Mr. Donald Campbell Mackey of Calcutta and were subsequently worked for many years by the Burdwān Stone Company. The Company, however, was obliged by financial considerations to close its operations, and disposed of its property in the hill. Recently, quarrying work was resumed during the construction of the railway through the district, when stone was required by the Railway Company for the line. Quarrying is carried on by blasting out large blocks, which are afterwards split by steel wedges into the required sizes, and dressed in the usual way. As compared with the stone of some other Indian quarries, that of Susuniā is inferior to the products of Chunār and Mirzāpur, but is more valuable than that of Barākar.*

Telisāyar.—See Jāmkundi.

Tungbhūm.—A name given to the tract of country lying in the south of the Raipur thāna. Tradition relates that it was so called after Nakur Tung, a descendant of Tung Deo, who came from the banks of the river Gandakī on pilgrimage to Jagannāth, where, by the favour of the god Jagannāth, he was made king of Purī. His grandson, Gangādhar Tung, was informed by Jagannāth that after him there would be no king of his line in Purī, and that therefore his son should change his name and go to some other country, where he would be king. Accordingly, Gangādhar Tung's son, Nakur Tung, taking with him his wife, his treasure and some soldiers, left Purī in 1270 Saka (1348 A.D.), and after 10 years of wandering settled in 1358 A.D. at Tikarpārā, a village near Syāmsundarpur.

At that time, the part of the district now comprised within *parganas* Shyāmsundarpur, Phulkusmā, Raipur, Simlāpāl, and Bhālāidihā, was called Rājāgrām. It had hitherto been ruled by a Rājā called Sāmantasar Rājā; but this Rājā having, we are told, been destroyed with his whole family by "jumping into fire," the country remained without a ruler and was overrun by robbers. Nakur Tung, having subdued the robbers and taken possession of the country, called it Jagannāthpur in honour of Jagannāth, whose idol he had brought with him, and himself assumed the title of Rājā Chhatra Nārāyan Deb. He brought with him 252 families of Utkal Brāhmans, whose descendants are now numerous in this part of the district. To one of those Brāhmans, Srīpati Mahāpātra, who was his spiritual guide and had acted as a general during the campaign, the Rājā made over

* Susuniā Stone Quarries, *Statistical Reporter*, 1876.

the territory now known as *parganas* Simlāpāl and Bhālāidihā, while a further grant of the land now called *pargana* Raipur was given to a member of the Sikhar Rāj family. During the time of the sixth Rājā, Lakshmī Nārāyan Deb, who before his succession was called Syāmsundar Tung, a dispute arose between him and his brother Mukut Nārāyan, which ended in the apportionment of the Rāj between them. The portion that fell on the lot of the elder, is now called *pargana* Syāmsundarpur, and that which formed the share of the younger, Phulkusmā. The Permanent Settlement of the two *parganas* was made with Rājā Sundar Nārāyan Deb and Rājā Darpa Nārāyan Deb respectively. The zamīndār of Phulkusmā has lost his property, as it has been sold in consequence of debts, while the representatives of the Syāmsundarpur family are in reduced circumstances, portions of the estate having been sold for liquidation of debts, while the remainder is encumbered.

To this day *parganas* Syāmsundarpur and Phulkusmā are generally called Tungbhūm or Tungābani, *i.e.*, the land of Tung. Members of the zamīndār's family are styled Tung or Tungābaninath, and are also called Bara Tung and Chhota Tung respectively. They are Kshattriyas by caste and are connected with the families of Bishnupur, Raipur, Supur, &c.

Vishnupur.—*See* Bishnupur.

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